

# Victor Fingar

*- friend, colleague  
and scientist*

*The death of Dr. Victor Fingar on October 27 was a shock to the entire Brown Cancer Center faculty. He had been a member of the Cancer Center since 1990. He was internationally recognized as a leader in the field of photodynamic therapy. He helped build a research program that investigated the effects of this novel treatment modality at the very basic level in the laboratory and at the clinical level with several new compounds being tested in patients. His work was marked by creativity and the application of new approaches to old problems. He developed strong collaborations with many scientists in the Brown Cancer Center and throughout the University. He was widely known as an academic 'good citizen' who was very loyal to the Cancer Center and the University. His loss leaves a large hole in the Cancer Center.*



Victor came to the Cancer Center from Roswell Park Memorial Cancer Center when he was recruited as a post-doctoral fellow 12 years ago. He rapidly became an independent investigator, developing a laboratory program in photodynamic therapy and the physiology of microcirculation that was internationally recognized and continually NCI funded. During his tenure he was among the most productive members of the Cancer Center. His work was creative, inventing new in vitro techniques to monitor microvascular responses to stimuli. These studies were among the first to identify and quantify the response to photodynamic therapy and the effects of cytokines on microcirculation. He collaborated with many investigators in the Cancer Center and at the University of Louisville, developing image analysis and utilizing in vitro model systems. He established a clinical phototherapy program at Norton Hospital. His research was clearly translational. He conducted pre-clinical studies using his model systems which led to phase I and phase II studies to determine the clinical utility. His work and achievements resulted in his eventual appointment as an Associate Professor in Surgery with tenure (1996), an Associate in Physiology (1993), and a member of the Cancer Center (1990) and the Center for Applied Microcirculation Research (1991). His use of animal models and his concerns about monitoring animal studies resulted in his appointment to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) in 1994, becoming its chairman two years ago.

Victor was from upstate New York and I – being a New Yorker – could identify with that region of the country. I could appreciate his passion for the Buffalo Bills. He and his wife, Barb, followed their team to Super Bowls to watch loss after loss. They trekked home for the holidays to either find feet of snow or to become snowed in. Perhaps that's why he lived on top of a hill in Floyd's Knob - so that he could enjoy handling the snow and ice that occasionally made getting to and from work more difficult.

He had a passion for vehicles. He and Barb had twin go-carts that they raced from Louisville to Indianapolis. He always struggled to do well, while

Barb got to the point that she was able to win. He rationalized her success on the fact that she was smaller and lighter or was less competitive. He eventually gave this up when the crashes and the injuries started mounting – probably his inability to win became frustrating. He bought a Hummer before they became fashionable. It was as big as the KCP Mammography Van and took up two spaces in the parking lot. He didn't bother to rationalize that purchase other than to say it was a good deal.

Victor skied until he tore up his shoulder a couple of years ago. He loved to play golf. We played together three or four times a year. He tried hard and was often frustrated by the fact that his desire to do well was overshadowed by his lack of ability. His physical problems from the shoulder injury and the car accident took their toll. But he continued – taking lessons and practicing. He continued to play in the Physiology 'Ryder Cup' series. We had even talked about returning to French Lick, where we had played before the course was renovated.

Victor liked to teach and spend time with students. He always had students and postdocs in the lab. He often would have a high school student working on a science fair project during the summer. He always spent time with the Cancer Center tours – whether they be scouts, students or visiting scientists – showing them all the neat gadgetry, the lasers and microscopic imaging analysis and the in vitro models. He spent a lot of time with my son, Clint. Clint went to St. Francis High School and would often walk over to my office while waiting for a ride home. If he had computer problems or needed a game installed, Victor would always help him. And some times they would just talk. It was a great experience for both of them.

Victor's and my offices and labs were next to each other. We talked science and other things most days. We helped each other with our research and supported each other at times when there weren't many other scientists in the Cancer Center. We worked with each other's postdocs and students. We held lab functions together. Our labs celebrated holidays, birthdays, weddings, births, confirmations, Bar and Bat Mitzvah's – and now death – together.

We were friends.  
Fred Hendler, M.D.

