



IN MEMORIAM

Edward Ornitz
Professor of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences
UC Los Angeles
1928 – 2015

Dr. Edward M. Ornitz, professor emeritus of psychiatry and biobehavioral sciences at the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, died on Sept. 14, following a lengthy fight with cancer. He was 86.

Ornitz received his undergraduate degree and M.D. from Stanford University and completed an internship at Los Angeles County General Hospital. He completed his adult psychiatry residency at Yale University and a child psychiatry fellowship at the Yale Child Study Center. He became a staff psychiatrist at the Reiss-Davis Clinic in L.A. in 1960. In 1963, he joined the faculty at UCLA, which remained his academic home until his retirement in 2006.

Ornitz was in the vanguard of biologically-based child psychiatrists in the 1960s and '70s. He and his UCLA colleagues, going against the prevailing dogma of psychoanalysis, were among the first to demonstrate neurophysiologic differences in children with autism compared to healthy children, findings that helped establish the brain-based nature of the syndrome. Ornitz also performed seminal studies on the development of sleep and brain stem responses in children and applied psychophysiological measures to study children with post-traumatic stress syndrome and children at risk for anxiety.

The author of 129 papers and reports, Ornitz was regarded as a rigorous, meticulous scientist with a genuine love for research. He maintained his laboratory and expanded his collaborations into new areas of research into his 80s. Mild-mannered and gentle, he was appreciated for his thoughtfulness, broad intellectual curiosity, commitment to mentoring and strong ethical perspective.

Ornitz also led a full life outside of science. He was an avid runner, marathoner, hiker, and world traveler. He is survived by his wife, Linda, two sons and four grandchildren.