Mehdi Tavassoli, MD 1933–1993

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Reno, Nev.

On Saturday September 18, 1993, Mehdi Tavassoli died of heart failure at the University of Mississippi Hospital in Jackson. He was 60 years old. On Tuesday September 21, 1993, the highly successful workshop on 'Hematopoietic Stem Cell Purification and Biology' sponsored and organized by the Cellular Hematology Branch of the Division of Blood Diseases and Resources of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute was most appropriately dedicated to Mehdi Tavassoli. In his remarks, Dr. Alan S. Levine, Chief of the Cellular Hematology Branch, noted Dr. Tavassoli's significant contributions to hematology and our knowledge of hematopoietic stem cell biology.

Dr. Tavassoli's scientific contributions are well recognized by the national as well as international scientific community. He was known both for his structural studies of the blood-forming organs, and for the advances in technique that he brought to these studies, and also for work on the mechanisms by which hematopoietic stem cells are targeted to the hematopoietic tissues. His studies were always interpretive and his vision bold. He loved his work and shared this excitement with others in his presentations at scientific meetings and symposia, and in the more than 400 peer-reviewed papers, reviews, monographs and books that he published. He also participated in the administration of biomedical research by serving on numerous editorial and review panels. He was a superb mentor who spent considerable time with his staff and fellows to insure their successful career development. On every opportunity, he would promote his fellows and colleagues in the scientific community. Mehdi was an avid reader and took great pleasure in discussing literature and philosophy with his friends and colleagues. His love of literature and philosophy was derived in part from his father, a highly educated and prominent religious figure who devoted much of his life to helping the needy in south Tehran. Mehdi's broad cultural and political views and his belief in the goodness of man were also shaped by his frequent contacts with the leading political and economics figures during the years he served as the economics reporter for a leading daily newspaper in Iran. He provided active support for the symphony, opera, art museum, and planetarium. He was a good friend to many of us. He will be greatly missed.

Dr. Tavassoli was born on March 30, 1933, and received his Doctor of Medicine from Tehran University in 1961. Soon thereafter he came to the United States for additional training, first in Cambridge, Mass., later in Colorado, and at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. In 1964 he returned to Massachusetts, where he was a medical resident and then Chief Resident in Medicine at Carney Hospital in Boston. In 1966 he started work as a research fellow in hematology at Tufts-New England Medical Center, and as a trainee in the Department of Biology at MIT. At Tufts, Mehdi worked with his mentor and life-long friend, Dr. William Crosby. The early and mid 1960s were exciting times and Mehdi remembered his years in Boston fondly. He was considering writing his memoirs of those years at Harvard Square. At the time of his death he

was Professor of Medicine and Chief of Hematology at the Veterans Administration Medical Center, Jackson, Miss.

Most of all Mehdi loved his family and took great pleasure in his children. He is survived by his wife, Marie, and three children. Ali, Javad, and Cherine. Mehdi was buried next to his father in his father's mosque on October 3, 1993.