Dear Einstein Community:

On Friday evening, we learned of the death of our colleague and friend John S. Blanchard, Ph.D., the Dan Danciger Professor of Biochemistry at Einstein, and a pioneering researcher in his field of enzymology. John was just 67 and looking forward to continued service to Einstein as professor emeritus. This unanticipated news has been a shock to those of us who knew and worked with him.

John arrived at the College of Medicine in 1979, as an NIH postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Sasha Englard, Ph.D. After four years, he joined our faculty as an assistant professor and rose through the ranks, earning full professor status in 1993.

In 2009, John identified a promising new treatment for extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB). At the time of his discovery, this dangerous form of tuberculosis, caused by strains of TB bacteria that have become resistant to virtually all antibiotics, could not be treated effectively. He reported that a combination of two drugs (clavulanate and meropenem) was highly effective in halting the growth of XDR-TB in laboratory culture.

Following his report, John’s drug combination saved the lives of several patients with the disease and subsequently underwent two human trials, in South Africa and in Belgium. At John’s request, Einstein elected not to patent his discovery because he did not want to impede its use in Africa, where both multi-drug resistant and XDR-TB remain serious health risks.

John also was active in training many Ph.D. students toward productive careers. He organized and led the chemical biology facility and played a key role in many committees serving our institution, including the faculty senate budget committee. He also worked closely with our benefits department to represent the best interests of young faculty who needed advice on how to plan for retirement.
His dedication to Einstein was steadfast, and he was known to take tough stands where he believed doing so would make the College of Medicine stronger.

Memorial Information
The Blanchard family will hold an informal memorial service for John this Friday, November 12, at the Pelham Funeral Home, located at 64 Lincoln Avenue. It will follow visiting hours, which will be from 3 to 5 p.m.

In addition, a story about John will soon post on our homepage and intranet. It will include a link to a remembrance page, where you can share your memories of John and/or condolences.

We also will hold a memorial at Einstein recalling John’s many scientific and academic contributions. We will share the details when they are confirmed.

Sincerely,

Gordon F. Tomaselli, M.D.
The Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer
Montefiore Medicine

Edward R. Burns, M.D.
Executive Dean and Professor