

Robert I. Berkowitz, Psychiatry

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DEATHS

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Robert Berkowitz

Robert I. Berkowitz, a professor emeritus of psychiatry in the Perelman School of Medicine and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, died on October 16, 2022, of cardiac arrest. He was 74.

Born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Dr. Berkowitz earned a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University in Connecticut in 1969 and a medical degree from the University of Connecticut in 1973. He completed his residency in psychiatry at Connecticut in 1975, was a fellow at Yale University's Child Study Center until 1977, and then worked for a decade as an assistant professor and senior resident in Stanford University's division of child psychiatry and behavioral sciences. In 1990, Dr. Berkowitz was recruited to join the faculty of Penn's School of Medicine.

At Penn, Dr. Berkowitz amassed a distinguished academic record as a clinician, clinical researcher, educator, and administrator, and became renowned for his work on the causes and treatment of obesity. For 25 years, he served as the medical director of the Center for Weight and Eating Disorders in Penn's department of psychiatry. His work focused on evaluating the efficacy and safety of different modes of treatment, including pharmacological and behavioral approaches. He was also interested in the development of obesity, assessing the role of feeding behavior, physical activity, and metabolism in infancy and childhood, and studied the impact of weight stigmas, feeding habits, physical activity, metabolism, and mental health. At the center, Dr. Berkowitz mentored medical students and postdoctoral fellows and supervised the clinical training of psychiatry residents.

As an associate professor (clinician-educator) of psychiatry and pediatrics (a rank he attained in 1999), Dr. Berkowitz won several teaching awards and earned the admiration of his colleagues. In a tribute, colleagues at Penn and CHOP recalled his "generosity of spirit and his great chuckle, his ability to listen and be supportive, and just all around being a kind man." They said he was "always thoughtful about the care offered to his participants/patients and was an advocate for those who needed help." He held a secondary faculty appointment in the psychiatry department of Penn's Abramson Cancer Center. At CHOP, he was also the psychiatrist-in-chief and chair of the department of child and adolescent psychiatry, and there he helped create the New Jersey Transition to Adult Coordinated Care program, which guides families and young patients into adulthood. In 2017, he retired from Penn and was named a professor emeritus.

Outside of Penn, Dr. Berkowitz was active in his field. He coauthored the influential textbook *Obesity and Associated Eating Disorders: A Guide for Mental Health Professionals* in 2005 and wrote or cowrote nearly 200 peer-reviewed articles. He served on the boards of several academic journals. In his spare time, he enjoyed hiking, tennis, and impressing friends and family members by performing Beethoven pieces on the piano. "He was an incredible role model," his son said. "He was fiercely loyal and showed his family unconditional love. He was an inspirational father."

Dr. Berkowitz is survived by his wife, Barbara; his son, Ben; two grandchildren; and other relatives. His brother died earlier. A memorial service will be held later in California. Donations in his name may be made to the Anti-Defamation League, 605 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10158.