EDITORIAL

The passing of colleagues, and the passage of time**James T. Rutka, MD, PhD, FRCSC**

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THE news came too acutely. On Monday, April 13, 2015, a colleague emailed me that a highly respected member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Neurosurgery*, Dr. Andy Parsa, had passed away suddenly and unexpectedly. He was 48 years old.² The news was starkly reminiscent of prior sudden deaths of neurosurgeons whose lives had intersected with mine: Dr. Christopher Getch, Professor of Neurosurgery at Northwestern University and Past President of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons, who passed unexpectedly at the age of 50 years on January 9, 2012; and Dr. Charles Kuntz, Professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Cincinnati and prospective member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Neurosurgery: Spine*, who died this year on February 26, 2015, at the age of 50 years. All three neurosurgical colleagues were highly energetic, technically gifted, and academically productive. Each one accomplished more professionally in his short stay on earth than many of us do in a lifetime.

Andy and I knew each other well. We enjoyed each other's company at association meetings and brain tumor conferences. I followed his career path with great interest as he rose through the ranks of academic neurosurgery with his clinical focus on skull base surgery, and his research interests on immunotherapeutic approaches to malignant gliomas. I watched his rise within the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors; he was scheduled to take over as chair in May 2015. I was highly supportive of his election to the American Academy of Neurological Surgery in 2012, and I can recall having numerous conversations with him about his desire to lead a major neurosurgical program as department chair prior to his taking the position of the Michael J. Marchese Professor and Chair at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

From all of our interactions, it was clear to me that Andy was quietly driven and motivated to succeed in his neurosurgical career. He was well trained as a neurosur-

geon:scientist with his MD/PhD in immunology and cell biology from SUNY Downstate Medical Center, and his residency at Columbia University, where he worked assiduously in the brain tumor research laboratory of Dr. Jeffrey Bruce. Interestingly, Andy's first citation in the literature was in the *Journal of Neurosurgery* on "Antiglioma cytotoxic immune response" while he was still a medical student in Brooklyn.⁴

Throughout his career, Andy was a highly prolific author with over 245 peer-reviewed publications. His publications as first or corresponding author can be found in many specialty journals, such as *Journal of Neurosurgery*, *Neurosurgery*, and *World Neurosurgery*; neuro-oncology journals including *Neuro-Oncology* and *Journal of Neuro-Oncology*; and basic science journals including *PLoS One*, *Journal of Translational Medicine*, *Cancer*, *Oncogene*, and *Nature Medicine*. A review of the topics on which Andy wrote clearly demonstrates his focus on human brain tumors of all types and research on immunotherapy of human gliomas. His name is associated with many of the best contemporary clinical series on patients with intramedullary spinal cord tumors, vestibular schwannomas, meningiomas, gliosarcomas, hemangiopericytomas, pineocytomas, chordomas, ependymomas, choroid plexus tumors, and glioblastoma multiforme (GBM).

In the laboratory, Andy used his research training in immunology and immunotherapy to develop a vaccine for patients with malignant glioma—an extraordinary feat accomplished by very few neurosurgeons. This vaccine is generated against heat shock proteins (HSPs), which are extracted from patient glioma samples at surgery. What provides the patient specificity for the vaccine is the fact that HSPs act as molecular chaperones for unique binding peptides within the tumors. Andy published the "first in human" study of vaccination against high-grade gliomas using autologous tumor peptides bound to the 96-kD chaperone protein (HSP-96) in *Clinical Cancer*

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FIG. 1. *The Persistence of Memory*, Salvador Dalí, 1931, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York City, CREDIT: © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2015.

Research.³ This was followed by a Phase II study in 41 patients with surgically resectable recurrent GBM, which was published in *Neuro-Oncology* last year.¹ The results of the HSP-96 vaccination in additional clinical trials for patients with GBM will be forthcoming in the near future.

As Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Neurosurgery*, I delighted in seeing Andy's thoughtful and comprehensive reviews of articles that were assigned to him. Oddly, by virtue of the sequential peer-review process of the *Journal*, several of Andy's reviews came to me after his passing on April 13, 2015. Andy's final publication in the *Journal*, on the impact of time to initiation of chemotherapy on patient survival after resection of newly diagnosed GBM, also appeared in print after he had died.⁵ It reminded me that the written and published word survives all of us, and can be used as a partial measure of our accomplishments on earth. Andy's seminal work on human brain tumors and contributions to the literature will undoubtedly be quoted and remembered, now until eternity.

As driven as Andy was as a neurosurgeon to making a difference in the lives of patients with malignant brain tumors, and becoming a department chair of neurosurgery, Andy was even more committed and devoted to his family. At meetings, he delighted in showing me photographs of his wife, Charlotte, and his children, Julia, Micheline, and Ismail, of whom he was exceedingly proud. While

Andy's life on earth was cut all too short, it is clear to me that in the years that he lived, his clock was not set to standard time. He defied the definition of time (Fig. 1) through the supernumerary personal and professional accomplishments that characterized his being.

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