

Phyllis Elaine Bowen (1940–2018)

Nutrition scientist and humanitarian Phyllis Bowen dies at 78

Christy C. Tangney

Rush University Medical Center, Department
of Clinical Nutrition, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Dr. Phyllis Bowen, the innovative, thought-provoking nutrition researcher and educator, passed away on March 19, 2018, from surgical complications. In 2009, Phyllis retired and was named Professor Emerita in the Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She received a BS in Experimental Foods from Iowa State University, and an MS and a PhD in Nutrition from Cornell University, the latter with minors in biochemistry and physiology.

First, it is important to remember her pedagogy. She was a remarkably inquisitive and effective educator and communicator. Through her lectures, she inspired me to pursue a research career in nutrition, as she probably did for so many. Phyllis received many awards for teaching excellence: twice the Excalibur Award (in 2006 and 2008), the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Teaching Excellence Award, the Amoco Silver Circle Award for undergraduate teaching at UIC, and numerous certificates of teaching excellence at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where she taught and conducted nutrition research before coming to UIC in 1983. These same skills were also manifest in many presentations at various scientific conferences and workgroups. She was a critical thinker and a tremendous contributor to scientific conferences and to students and fellow researchers alike, but with a humility and integrity that are rare to find.

**“Her contributions to
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Her contributions to nutrition science were vast. Her pioneering research on the pharmacokinetics of carotenoids and other bioactive ingredients in foods with respect to eye biology and function and to cancer biology (especially for prostate, colon, and breast cancers) is well known. She ran several human feeding trials meticulously. One exemplary effort was a tomato-based feeding study she designed to understand carotenoid metabolism in men at risk for prostate cancer, and specifically to identify possible surrogate endpoint biomarkers for cancer regression or progression for future clinical trials.^{1,2} Those experiences were communicated in a key book chapter she coauthored on designing dietary intervention studies.^{3,4}

Phyllis modeled innovative professional services to the nutrition science field; she had incredible creative energy! She was the founding member of, and served for many years on, the Scientific Advisory Board for the California Dried Plum Board. She authored several publications on nutrition policy, including the role of commodity boards in nutrition research.⁵ She was the founding member of the Carotenoids and Retinoid Interaction Group (CARIG) and was the Chair of CARIG for several years. She also helped establish the International Society for Carotenoids Research and was a founding and advisory committee member for the Plant Phenolics in Health Research Interest Group (PhenHRIG). She was honored for her work when she was named an International Carotenoid Society Fellow in 2017. Phyllis also founded and co-directed the Functional Foods for Health Program jointly between UIC and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She served on the Board of Scientific Counselors, Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at the National Cancer Institute; on the Arteriosclerosis, Hypertension and Lipid Metabolism Advisory Committee of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI); as an external reviewer for the Dietary Reference Intakes; and as a National Institutes of Health (NIH) State-of-the-Science panel



Dr. Phyllis Bowen: “A remarkably inquisitive and effective educator and communicator”

member at the Preventing Alzheimer’s Disease and Cognitive Decline Conference.⁶ She was also on numerous editorial boards (*Journal of Nutrition*, *Nutrition Today*, *Nutraceutical Research*, and *Integrative Cancer Therapies*) and on the Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) of several trials. Moreover, she served as Assistant Dean at the UIC College of Applied Health Sciences (2003–2006), as well as Associate Head of the UIC Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics (1988–1994).

Phyllis’s contributions to her community were also numerous. She served as the first board chairperson of the Alliance of Hope, a support organization for survivors of family suicide. She was the editor of the 2017 and 2018 *Journal of the Conference of Global Transformation for the Landmark Education* annual conference. She is survived by her loving husband and partner, Sam, her son Jeremy, her brother Norman, and three grandchildren and their mother, Jeannine. Phyllis was an equalizer. As her son said of her: “A gardener [not only of plants] but of people,” she wanted to help you grow and flourish! She will be missed by all who knew her.

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Correspondence: *Christy C. Tangney PhD., Professor, Departments of Clinical Nutrition & Preventive Medicine, Associate Dean for Research, College of Health Sciences, Rush University Medical Center, 600 S Paulina St, Room 716 ACC, Chicago, IL 60612, USA Email: ctangney@rush.edu*

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