



Michael Wakelam 1955 - 2020

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The Institute is devastated to announce the news of the death of Professor Michael Wakelam, the Institute's Director. Professor Wakelam died yesterday from respiratory complications arising from a suspected Covid-19 infection.

Professor Wakelam joined the Babraham Institute as Director in 2007. As the Institute's Director, Professor Wakelam brought a dedication to scientific expertise, both in creating and protecting the environment required for excellent science to happen, and in creating an environment that developed expertise and capabilities in each individual to allow them to achieve their best. He was passionately committed to providing an excellent training experience for the Institute's PhD students. Michael was an active voice on the value of fundamental research and international science. His research passion was lipids (cellular fats) and the techniques used to study them, and he maintained a research lab and lipidomics facility at the Institute during his time as Director.

Professor Wakelam was a strong advocate of the power of uniting academic and commercial research, as exemplified by the fruitful partnerships that exist today between the Institute's academic research and the commercial research community of the Babraham Research Campus.

Professor Wakelam's warm personality and care for others were reflected in his leadership of the Institute. He enjoyed the opportunities his work brought in meeting and connecting with others, including representing the Institute as part of the EU-LIFE alliance of research institutes. His loss will be felt widely across the scientific community and by all those who knew him. The Institute has opened a book of remembrance for anyone who would like to share their memories of Michael or tributes to him. Please email these to comms@babraham.ac.uk. We will collect these together and share them with Michael's family.

Professor Wakelam is survived by his wife Jane and their two sons Alex and Patrick.

Biographical information

Professor Wakelam obtained his BSc in Medical Biochemistry (1977) and PhD in Biochemistry from Birmingham University (1980). Following post-docs at the University of Konstanz in Germany and Imperial College London (as a Beit Memorial Fellow) he was appointed to a Lectureship in Biochemistry at Glasgow University in 1985. In 1993 he moved back to Birmingham as Professor of Molecular Pharmacology in the Institute for Cancer Studies. He joined the Babraham Institute as Director in 2007.

Honours and awards

Professor Wakelam was the Honorary Professor of Lipid Signalling in the Cambridge University Clinical School, an Honorary Professor at the University of Birmingham and a visiting Professor at King's College London. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology and a member of the Academia Europaea. He received the **Morton Lectureship from the Biochemical Society in 2018**. He had over twenty years research experience in the area of cell signalling and communication; a major focus of his research was upon the use and development of advanced lipidomics methodologies in determining the functions of individual lipid molecular species in the regulation of signalling pathways in normal and cancer cells and in inflammatory responses.

Notes to Editors

Press contact

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Image description

Professor Michael Wakelam in the lipidomics facility at the Babraham Institute. Image used courtesy of Keith Heppell and the Cambridge Independent.

About the Babraham Institute

The Babraham Institute undertakes world-class life sciences research to generate new knowledge of biological mechanisms underpinning ageing, development and the maintenance of health. Our research focuses on cellular signalling, gene regulation and the impact of epigenetic regulation at different stages of life. By determining how the body reacts to dietary and environmental stimuli and manages microbial and viral interactions, we aim to improve wellbeing and support healthier ageing. The Institute is strategically funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), part of UK Research and Innovation, through an Institute Core Capability Grant and also receives funding from other UK research councils, charitable foundations, the EU and medical charities.