

**In Memoriam**

**Brian R. Flay (February 1, 1947-February 11, 2021)**



The Prevention Science community mourns the loss of Dr. Brian R. Flay. Brian passed away peacefully on 2/11/2021, after a valiant, years-long, cancer battle. Brian is survived by his wife, Dr. Carol Allred, whom he first met and fell in love with at the 1998 Annual Meeting of SPR in Park City, Utah (a love story he excitedly retold countless times over the years). Through Carol, he gained a family of three children and their spouses, and four grandchildren, all of whom brought him great joy.

Born in Hamilton, New Zealand, his academic journey brought him to Northwestern University in 1976 to study Methodology under Drs. Thomas Cook and Donald Campbell as a Fullbright-Hays Postdoctoral Fellow. After a brief and productive tenure with the University of Waterloo, he joined the University of Southern California in 1980. Brian rose in rank from Assistant Professor to Acting Director of the Institute for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Research. He left sunny California for The Windy City, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, in 1987. While at UIC, he served as Director of the Health Research and Policy Centers. Love brought Brian to the Pacific Northwest, and he joined the faculty of Oregon State University in 2005, where he served as Professor and Director of the Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families. While at Oregon State, he would commute to and from Boise, Idaho to be by Carol's side. Finally, in 2013, he was able to join Carol full-time in Boise, having earned a position as Research Professor at Boise State University. At the time of his passing, Brian was a Research Professor in the College of Education at Boise State University, Professor Emeritus in the School of Social and Behavioral Health Sciences at Oregon State University, and Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Brian was a prolific scholar whose contributions to the field of Prevention Science spanned over 40 years. In that time, he acquired over \$40 million in grants (as a PI; and more than \$120 million overall), published nearly 300 scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, and contributed a multitude of books, book chapters, and health promotion curricula. Early in his career, his efforts focused on understanding and addressing substance use, particularly in adolescent populations. Over time, his research increasingly addressed efforts to promote health equity. For example, he led the development, implementation, and evaluation of the of the Aban Aya school curriculum and community program for African American youth in urban Chicago. He was also a leader in the field of social-emotional and character development, having led the evaluation of the Positive Action program in multiple high-risk settings. Dr. Flay was also a Co-PI and member of the Promise Neighborhoods Research Consortium (PNRC), a collaborative effort between researchers and community members to improve wellbeing in high-poverty neighborhoods.

Throughout his career, Brian was passionate and committed to improving conditions and outcomes for children *through strong science*. The Society for Prevention Research has been a strong proponent of rigorous experimental evaluations of preventive interventions. Brian was a key person in strengthening those norms. It was not always the case that preventionists evaluated interventions through proper experimental designs. Moreover, when advocacy for the use of “evidence-based” interventions began to grow, some of the governmental agencies proposed and used standards that were far below those that would ensure that the intervention was making a real difference. It was because of this that SPR decided to articulate standards for experimental evaluations. Because of his methodological prominence, Brian was asked to chair the SPR Standards Committee, which resulted in the seminal publication, “Standards of evidence: Criteria for efficacy, effectiveness and dissemination.”

Brian was also the primary developer of the Theory of Triadic Influence [TTI], a comprehensive meta-theory that he felt could be applied to understand and intervene upon all health behaviors. Proving that good theory takes time to develop, he often spoke of how he continuously thought and dreamed about the TTI from 1976 to 1992. Over the years, he continued working on the theory, publishing a revised version in 2008. During an interview in 2015, he stated he looked forward to the theory’s continued use in the future. A testament to his impact on the fields of Public Health, Psychology, Health Behavior/Health Theory, and Prevention Science, Brian gained Fellowship status with the Society of Behavioral Medicine (1997), Society for Community Research and Action (1998), American Academy of Health Behavior (2000), and Society for Prevention Research (2016). He was truly a stellar scientist, and his influence and consequential contributions will continue to improve science and lives for many years to come.

Although Brian had a career filled with admirable accomplishments, one of his greatest professional points of pride was the success of his many mentees. A 2013 Recipient of the Friend of The Early Career Preventionists Network Award, Brian was a committed mentor to a multitude of early-, mid- and senior-career professionals. Brian had a profound impact on his mentees lives, and we will try our best to live in a way that honors his legacy. Brian, you asked us for the moon, and you were always there to serve as our patient and humble guide throughout our journeys. Now you are shining above us like the North Star you always were – ‘thank you’, ‘merci’, ‘gracias’, ‘grazie’, ‘danke’, ‘xie xie’, ‘mahalo’.

While we mourn his loss, we know that Brian would want us to “Be Positive.” Those wishing to honor his life can make a donation in Brian's name to the Hunstman Cancer Institute. <https://huntsmancancer.org/giving/foundation/ways-to-give/> .