In memory of E. Richard Blonsky, MD
AAPM Past President

The field of Pain Medicine has suffered a great loss in the passing of one of its pioneers and leaders, E. Richard Blonsky, MD. Dr. Blonsky died in late August 2009 from pancreatic cancer. He was 74 years old.

Dr. Blonsky graduated from Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine in 1955 and completed his residency and fellowship at NU’s McGaw Medical Center. A respected Neurosurgeon and Pain Medicine specialist, Dr. Blonsky practiced for over 40 years. He acted as director of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC) Center for Pain Studies from 1985-1993 and established the Pain & Rehabilitation Clinic of Chicago in 1993. Dr. Blonsky also held the rank of Clinical Professor of Neurology at Northwestern University.

He was one of the founders and early presidents of AAPM (1992-1993) and a founding editorial board member of Pain Medicine journal. Most recently, Dr. Blonsky served the AAPM Board as its representative from the AAPM Council of Past Presidents. He was also a past-president for the Midwest Pain Society, and served on committees of several pain and neurological organizations.

Notable accomplishments:
- Dr. Blonsky was a frequent faculty member and scientific poster presenter at AAPM’s Annual Meetings
- He was one of the authors of a consensus statement from AAPM and the American Pain Society regarding the use of opioids for the treatment of chronic pain
- In 2006, Dr. Blonsky, along with Robert G. Addison, MD, founder of RIC Center for Pain Studies, was honored with a research grant in his and Dr. Addison’s name by the Midwest Pain Society in dedication of years of work in pain research

AAPM and ABPM Leaders remember Dr. E. Richard Blonsky:

“He was one of our founders and has been a loyal and steady hand for our organization over the years - as one of our early Presidents; as a founding and current editorial board member of Pain Medicine, where for 10 years he dutifully completed timely reviews with intelligence and integrity; and most recently, as the first Council of Past Presidents’ representative on the Board of Directors.”

Rollin M. Gallagher MD, MPH
AAPM President
Pain Medicine Editor-in-Chief

“Richard Blonsky was the definition of a "mensch" a real human being. I will miss his friendliness and support.
I will never forget once being rather frustrated at the some problems with my work on a committee and his reassuring voice of support helping me work it out. His guidance and friendship will be missed by all.”

Eduardo (Eddy) M Fraifeld, MD, DABA, DABPM
AAPM President Elect and Specialty Advisor CPT & RUC
“Dick Blonsky served as President of AAPM from 1992 to 1993. The annual meeting was turned into a virtual battlefield when a small but extremely vocal group of dissidents who disagreed with the mission and goals of the Academy attempted a coup d’état. They were unsuccessful largely because of the efforts of Dick who handled the challenge with grace, aplomb, and decisive firmness. He was an unassuming gentle man with great inner strength and strong convictions fortified by integrity, wisdom & honor. He and I were both from Chicago and often shared fond memories of happy times in the past. We are all, personally & professionally, made poorer by his loss.”

Philipp M Lippe, MD
AAPM, Executive Medical Director and Past President

“Whenever I think of Dick Blonsky, I always recall his Presidential Year when AAPM was challenged at our annual meeting by members who did not endorse AAPM’s strategy to become the voice of Pain Medicine in the AMA. Dick handled the crisis with strength and grace and AAPM prevailed. I will miss having dinner with him and sharing our insights about our beloved calling at our annual meetings.”

Norman Marcus, MD
AAPM External Affairs Committee Chair and Past President

“The news of Dick’s passing was very saddening for those of us lucky enough to know and work with this remarkable man. His skill, passion and diplomacy guided us through the most tempestuous time in the Academy’s 25-year history and were crucial to its very existence today. For years, he also contributed his wisdom, experience and practical mindset to writing and critiquing the items that comprise ABPM’s certification examination. His sage counsel, level-headedness, friendship and determination to do the right thing were a touchstone to all who relied upon him.”

J. David Haddox, DDS, MD
Vice-Chair, AAPM Council of Past Presidents and Chair, ABPM Examination Council

“He was President of AAPM during perhaps the most difficult time in its history. He led with grace and conviction. He stood up to adversity and promoted the Academy. He was one of the nicest people I’ve ever known and genuinely cared about people.”

Jeff Engle
Former Executive Director of AAPM

“Dick Blonsky was a true pioneer in the Pain Medicine movement. Together with Ben Crue and a handful of others, he was one of the first to conceptualize the American Academy of Pain Medicine (originally the American Academy of Algology) as a separate group from the American Pain Society that would solely represent the interests of physicians dealing with pain patients. The phenomenal growth of the AAPM since its humble beginnings is a tribute to Dick’s foresight and his many years of service.”

Andrew Shetter, MD
AAPM Past President

“Dr Blonsky (he allowed me to call him Prof. ERB) was my truly thoughtful mentor in my first year on the AAPM Board. By example, he taught me the art of effective listening at a time when I really needed it the most. From his professorial and most kind manner, I learnt the history and early struggles of AAPM and ABPM. A man of great intelligence and integrity, he was always generous with his time.”

Zahid H. Bajwa, MD
AAPM Secretary
“It is unfortunate when such an integral part of the pain community is lost. Personally, I will miss his warmth, his caring, the thoughtful consideration and counsel that he provided, his dry sense of humor and his voice. He seemed to so enjoy life! He was so helpful in developing the maintenance of certification process.”
Robin Hamill-Ruth, MD
ABPM President-Elect

“He was also a very strong family man, father, husband, and grandfather. He had a joy about him that he shared with the whole world. We will truly miss him.”
Albert Ray, MD
AAPM Past President

“When all is said and done, and accomplishments are duly registered, we seem to remember kindness above all...”
Perry Fine, MD
AAPM Treasurer