

Judith Levin Award

Judith enjoyed a long, outstanding career as a biochemist. She earned a Ph.D. in Biochemistry at Columbia University studying the enzymatic formation of 5-enolpyruvyl shikimate 3-phosphate and was a postdoctoral fellow studying protein synthesis with Nobel Prize winner Marshall Nirenberg at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Following her postdoctoral fellowship, Judith studied murine leukemia virus replication and made several trailblazing discoveries, including finding that virions can assemble in the absence of genomic RNA. In 1973, she joined the Laboratory of Molecular Genetics, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at NIH and in 1984 became Head of the Unit on Viral Gene Regulation. When the AIDS epidemic emerged in the 1980s, Judith shifted her research focus to HIV and was funded for many years by the NIH Intramural AIDS Targeted Antiviral Program from its inception in 1987. From 1992 until her retirement in 2014, she served as Head of the Section on Viral Gene Regulation in the Laboratory of Molecular Genetics and its successor Program in Genomics of Differentiation. Some highlights of her retrovirus research included characterizing the function of the nucleocapsid and the host APOBEC3 proteins in HIV infection. In retirement, she remained active in the field, e.g., co-editing a special issue on retrovirus replication in the year before she passed away. Judith was a caring mentor to many trainees and a wonderful role model for other women scientists. More details of her career and life are available in her [obituary](#) and [tribute article](#).

Judith had a strong connection to the Cold Spring Harbor Retrovirus Meeting. She attended nearly every year – even after retirement, she continued to attend in-person or virtually. Her connection to Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory stretches back to 1962 when she attended a course there as a graduate student. She became a cherished participant at the Retrovirus meeting – presenting her work as well as chairing sessions. Judith loved to attend this meeting – hearing about the latest research, connecting with scientific colleagues and friends, and establishing new relationships and collaborative projects. This prize is intended to bring this excitement to future generations of scientists in the retrovirus field.