

Lifetime Achievement Award 2012



2012 API Lifetime Achievement Award
Franklin Elevitch, MD

The API family has experienced the loss of an amazing pioneer in the field of pathology informatics. We are grateful for Dr. Elevitch's enormous contributions to the subspecialty and for his service to the society. Recently, Bob McGonnagle (CAP Today), Dr. J. Mark Tuthill, Dr. Ulysses G.J. Balis, and Dr. Raymond Aller provided some heartfelt words to honor Dr. Elevitch and his legacy:

"Franklin Elevitch, MD was the mentor most important to me in my career in pathology informatics.

Early in Frank's career, before I met him, he developed and patented an electrophoretic method for isoenzymes. I believe his company was called ACI (Analytical Chemistry Incorporated). This company was purchased by Corning, and was a standard method in laboratories for decades.

I met Frank when I took a 6-month rotation at Mt. Zion Hospital with him in my Laboratory Medicine residency. From the beginning, his enthusiasm and expertise were captivating. He was in the process of implementing the first in-hospital instance of the Meditech Laboratory Information System. Since this was an area of great interest to me, I volunteered to help, and implemented several tools during my rotation. Frank had an innovative and creative approach to addressing the information processing challenges of laboratory medicine, and a knack for encapsulating central concepts. For example, he referred to the process of re-starting the laboratory computer (which was often necessary in those days) as CPR - Computer Processor Resuscitation.

I suggested to Frank that there was a great need for a national meeting course in the fundamentals of laboratory information systems. Frank and I put together a course proposal, and

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after two years the ASCP program committee finally scheduled our course into the Fall 1979 ASCP meeting. Frank and I gave that course at every Fall and Spring ASCP meeting until 1986. We realized that it would be helpful to turn this material into a textbook, and published The ABCs of LIS in 1986, and a revised edition in 1989. For many years, this was the standard textbook on laboratory information systems.

In 1984, Frank became chair of the CAP Informatics Committee. I was delighted to join him on that committee. Together with several talented pathology informaticists, we proposed and presented dozens of informatics seminars at the CAP National Meetings. Indeed, in the early 1990's, over 50% of the courses being presented at the CAP national meeting were focused on informatics.

After his retirement from El Camino Hospital, Frank continued his work by consulting via his firm Health Care Engineering. Frank was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Association for Pathology Informatics.

Frank was devoted to his wife Joann, and to their daughter Jill and grandsons Zach and Charlie. Frank and Joann loved spending time at both their home in Palo Alto, and their coffee farm in Kona, Hawaii.

Regrettably, in 2023, Frank's health declined, and he lost Joann, his wife of 68 years (they were married July 3, 1955) in February 2023. He passed away in May 2024 at age 89."

Dr. Ray Aller
Clinical Professor Emeritus
USC School of Medicine

"Frank Elevitch was one of the most recognized and honored pathologists of his generation. He received the API Lifetime Achievement award in 2012. He chaired many committees and councils of the CAP, including a long tenure on the CAP Informatics Committee, Practice Management, Managed Care, and SNOMED Authority.

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Frank's entrepreneurial gifts surfaced early on in his lucrative improvements in electrophoresis instrumentation. Above all, Frank will be remembered for his enthusiasm for the field and ever-present smile. He was everywhere at lab meetings for a long time: ASCP/CAP, CLMA, AACC and more. Like so many API honorees, his footprint is indelible."

Bob McGonnagle
CAP Today

"Dr. Frank Elevitch was one of the luminaries in Pathology and early to recognize the importance of Pathology Informatics. He and Dr. Ray Aller were the first two people I met (at a CAP Informatic round table) who referred to pathology informatics by name. After meeting them, I went in search of Bruce Friedman, whom Frank suggested I contact. A few steps away were Ul Balis and Ron Weinstein. For me, the rest is the history of my career. Dr. Elevitch's and Aller's book "The ABC's of LIS", was the first informatics text I ever read, and the only academic work I then knew of in this field. For those introductions and his future encouragements I am eternally grateful. That he was an early recipient of an API Lifetime Achievement award was personally so gratifying. We will all miss you Frank. You may not be with us on this side, but you will ever be remembered."

Dr. J. Mark Tuthill
Division Head, Pathology Informatics
Henry Ford Health System

"With Frank Elevitch's passing, the Pathology Informatics community lost one of its brilliant founding visionaries, who saw the potential for automation and the use of computational tools decades ahead of his peers. As has already been mentioned by several others, Frank's impact to pathology and lab medicine was broad, extending from clinical assay design to fundamental aspects of lab automation. When I met him in 1991, having been appointed as a resident member of the CAP Informatics Committee, Frank, as that committee's chair, made it a point to enthusiastically promote

the importance of informatics. His passion for the fledgling field had a profound impact on me – my pursuing a career in informatics is in no small part due to his observation that my interests in programming, computer engineering, and instrumentation design would fit well with this subspecialty. Of course, he was absolutely right. I found my people in selecting Pathology Informatics as a career. On a personal level, he was the most affable and kind person that one could imagine, with him hosting the entire Informatics Committee on multiple occasions at events in his home in Kona, Hawaii.

Rest in peace, Frank."

Dr. Ulysses G.J. Balis
Director, Division of Pathology Informatics
Michigan Medicine, University of Michigan

Dr. Franklin Elevitch has made key contributions to pathology informatics over a number of decades. In 1977, he was one of the first to install a Meditech LIS in his hospital. This experience served as the basis for his ASCP national meeting seminar, The ABCs of LIS, presented twice a year from 1979 until 1986. In 1984, he was appointed the first chairman of the CAP Laboratory Information Systems Committee – this subsequently became the Informatics Committee. From the mid-80's through the 1990's, over half of the educational content of the CAP national meetings were informatics seminars, designed and presented by members of Dr. Elevitch's Committee. Subsequently, Dr. Elevitch has served on several other CAP informatics-related committees, including the SNOMED Authority, and most recently the Diagnostic Intelligence and Health Information Technology Committee. He was awarded the CAP Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007.