

Vale Dr Sidney Wolfe: a tribute from Health Action International Asia Pacific

June 12, 1937 - January 1, 2024,

Sidney Manuel Wolfe was born in Cleveland USA, June 12, 1937 and died in Washington, January 1, 2024..



In 1971 he founded the Health Research Group with Ralph Nader. The Health Research Group was part of the enterprise that was launched as Public Citizen that same year. Sid invented a new approach of 'research-based advocacy' to get dangerous drugs and devices off the market, win new protections for worker health and safety, to address doctor misconduct, to challenge the Food and Drug Administration - FDA (USA)- to do its job, and to hold pharmaceutical companies

accountable.

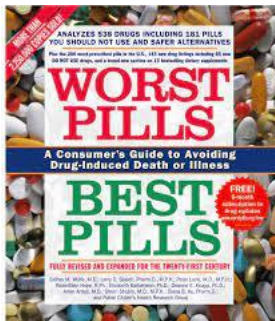


Dr Mira Shiva and Dato' Seri Anwar Fazal - HAI/HAIAP co-founders - have exceptional memories of him at meetings and consultations throughout our journey.

Robert Weissman, President of Public Citizen and also a long traveller with HAIAP says of Sid - ' Sid was brilliant (he won a 'MacArthur Genius Grant') and fearless in his advocacy. But what was most singular about him professionally was his passion for advancing health justice. There was a distinctive fierceness and fury to his work. Everyone who knew or even encountered Sid — allies and adversaries alike — experienced his intensity.'

The battles were based in the USA but they were reflected throughout the world and their impact was global.

Robert Weissman: 'Sid's sense of injustice about drugs, devices, and a health system that imposed avoidable and needless suffering reflected the underlying science. He carried out cutting-edge research of the highest calibre. Under his leadership and the standards he established, the positions the Health Research Group staked out and advocated were rooted in science and evidence. When there are recommendations against approval of a drug, for example, it's because the available data shows that its risks are too great. Sure, sometimes there are judgment calls, but Sid saw that in the overwhelming number of cases when the FDA sided with a drug company against Public Citizen recommendation, it was ignoring the best science, responding instead to improper influence and refusing to uphold its core public health and consumer protection mission. With lives and people's well-being at stake, outrage was exactly the right response.'



Getting information to consumers widely was always a major priority and his book *Worst Pills, Best Pills* has been in the hands of many HAIAP colleagues. Multiple editions of that monumental book provided people with information about the side effects of medications and warned of drug interactions. Starting with the first edition in 1988, the book sold 2.5 million copies — the proceeds from those sales helped pay for Public Citizen's headquarters building.

Now there is a website, <https://www.worstpills.org/>, that is updated regularly, and *Worst Pills, Best Pills News*, a monthly newsletter with a peak circulation of more than 150,000.

Robert Weissman again:

'As we remember him, we know this: Sid saved the lives of tens and tens of thousands of people, almost none of whom will know the debt they owe to Sid. There's just no way to know about the drug that might have killed you but didn't because it was pulled from the market or never approved — due to Sid's work. Very few of the millions of people who benefited from safety warnings that Sid and his colleagues forced onto drugs will know why they were able to avoid serious health problems. The millions and millions of workers who avoided exposure to workplace toxins and hazards because of rules that Sid and colleagues forced into place will never know how Sid protected them from dangers and disease.'

Anwar Fazal:

'He was a legend.. a public interest intellectual extraordinaire.

He was a disciplined researcher, an incubator and a catalyst.

He got things done.

Sydney Wolfe did not die. He will continue to inspire us.'

See also

Robert Weissman: <https://www.citizen.org/remembersidneywolfe/>

New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/03/health/sidney-m-wolfe-dead.html>

Washington Post: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/obituaries/2024/01/01/sidney-wolfe-public-citizen-dies/>

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?409995-101/community-organizing-afternoon-session>