

## Frederick P. Li, scientist who helped prove genetic link to cancer risk, dies

Dr. Frederick P. Li, who helped prove to a doubting medical establishment that heredity and [genetics](#) play a major role in some forms of [cancer](#), died on June 12 at his home in Brookline, Mass. He was 75.

His wife, Dr. Elaine Shiang, confirmed his death and said the probable cause was Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Li had [dementia](#) for a number of years and retired in 2008 from the [Dana-Farber Cancer Institute](#) in Boston, where he had worked for more than 30 years.

Dr. Li, who was also a professor at Harvard's medical school and its school of public health, was best known for research that he began in the 1960s at the National Cancer Institute with Dr. Joseph F. Fraumeni. They discovered four families that, Dr. Fraumeni said in an interview, were "loaded with cancer." Generation after generation, family members were struck down by different forms of the disease, often when they were children or young adults. Some who survived one type of cancer later developed another.

As the two researchers gathered information, the detailed family trees they drew were dotted with grim, shaded symbols indicating people living with cancer and those who had died of it. The same pattern of disease emerged again and again, suggesting that a dominant gene, passed from parent to child, was predisposing family members to various cancers.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Frederick P. Li, Who Proves a Genetic Cancer Link, Dies at 75](#)**