

UCSF

UC San Francisco Previously Published Works

Title

Felix Feng (1975–2024)

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4jk2c0tc>

Authors

Chu, Carissa

Quigley, David

Publication Date

2025

DOI

10.1038/s43018-025-00961-y

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Felix Feng (1975–2024)

By Carissa Chu & David Quigley

 Check for updates

Felix Feng was a superb clinician who cared for patients with prostate cancer. He ran a highly productive research lab, founded two companies, co-chaired national scientific meetings, and mentored dozens of researchers and doctors. He was a selfless leader, a dedicated father and husband, and our dear friend. Felix died in December 2024 following illness with cancer, and will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to advancing science, for fostering mentorship, and, above all, for his love and support for family and friends.

Felix trained as a radiation oncologist at the University of Michigan after completing a medical degree at Washington University, including a postdoctoral fellowship in the laboratory of Arul Chinnaiyan. He was accompanied on this journey by his wife Mary Feng, an accomplished radiation oncologist whom he met as an undergraduate student at Stanford University. After six years at the University of Michigan, they joined the faculty of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) in 2016, where Felix rose to become a professor of radiation oncology, urology and medicine, vice-chair of translational research at the UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, and co-chair of the Benioff Initiative for Prostate Cancer Research. Felix rapidly transformed an established prostate cancer program at UCSF into an international juggernaut.

Felix's strategic brilliance, unparalleled work ethic, disarmingly understated approach, and knack for creating scientific teams led his laboratory to produce the first clinical-grade biomarker panels to predict responses to radiation or hormone therapy after prostate surgery. His lab discovered the processes by which specific genes contribute to prostate cancer progression and metastasis. He founded two companies that individualized cancer treatments using novel technologies. He chaired the NRG Oncology Genitourinary Cancer Committee, shepherding numerous phase 3 trials that shaped national guidelines for prostate cancer with immediate impact. He recently led a team at UCSF that was awarded a multimillion-dollar SPORE grant from the National Cancer Institute. In 2024, Felix was



inducted as a fellow of the American Society for Radiation Oncology and received their mentorship award.

Beyond his scientific contributions, Felix was a beacon of inspiration. He nurtured and guided the next generation of researchers with his wisdom, kindness, and generosity. He climbed to the pinnacle of his field quickly but never basked in his own success. Instead, he reached out to the youngest and most junior trainees, providing them with the tools and guidance they needed to thrive and clearing the path for them. Through his extraordinary ability to see potential in others, he mentored countless postdoctoral scholars and graduate students who are now respected clinicians and faculty members around the world. Felix accomplished this by cultivating a vibrant and joyous atmosphere around him. His lab was not merely a place of research but a home for intellectual curiosity and camaraderie. He fostered a sense of family and an environment in which ideas and partnerships flourished. His mentees knew that they could count on him, not just for scientific guidance but for advice on life's big decisions. Even in his most difficult moments during his cancer therapy, Felix remained steadfast. He never allowed his illness to define him or his interactions. Colleagues who visited him in the final months

never found a man in sorrow but a mentor whose first words were always, "How are you doing? How's your family? What can I help you with?"

Felix's success was not limited to professional achievements; it was deeply rooted in his love for his family. His dedication as a husband and father was evident to all who knew him. The way he balanced an extraordinary career with an unwavering commitment to his relationships remains an inspiration to us today. His legacy lives on in his children, his mentees, and his patients. From here forward, we will be asking ourselves, "What would Felix do?" when confronted with the next big challenge. His impact is immeasurable, and his absence remains profound. But in the hearts and minds of those he mentored, loved and inspired, he will always remain a guiding force, a string that binds us together, and a light that continues to shine.

Carissa Chu  & **David Quigley** 

Department of Urology, Helen Diller Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of California, San Francisco, CA, USA.

✉ e-mail: carissa.chu@ucsf.edu

Published online: 18 April 2025