

James F. Myrtle, PhD



Biography

Dr. Myrtle holds a BS in Chemistry from UCLA, a MS in Chemistry from California State University, Long Beach, and a PhD in Biochemistry / Organic Chemistry from the University of California, Riverside, where his work on the discovery and biological function of the active form of Vitamin D helped establish this molecule as a steroid hormone rather than a vitamin. During his scientific career, Dr. Myrtle has produced 38 publications, abstracts and patents.

Dr. Myrtle has been teaching introductory chemistry since 2003, including teaching in the LA Unified School District and Loyola High School of Los Angeles. The last six years he has taught Chem 4 at El Camino College, Chem 20 at Compton College, and Chem 2 and Chem 3 at Long Beach City College. He has served as a member of the Advisory Board for the Chemistry / Biochemistry department at CSU Long Beach since 2003.

Dr. Myrtle came to the United States as an immigrant. With his brother and sister, the first in his family to go beyond grade school, he attended Compton High School, where he lettered in swimming (bronze medal, southern section CIF), and water polo (captain), while working weekends and 7 day/week summers for 3 years at the Lynwood car wash. Relegated to “shop” classes in high school, he none-the-less took courses in trigonometry and calculus at night school at Compton College. He attended Compton College after high school, where he was inspired by an excellent chemistry instructor to apply to UCLA. After UCLA, he completed coursework for a high school teaching credential before accepting a fellowship for a MS in Chemistry, followed by his PhD.

Following postdoctoral studies at UC Berkeley, Dr. Myrtle began a career as a research scientist with the Smith Kline Corporation developing new medical diagnostic tests, and then managing a medical laboratory. He subsequently joined a “start up” company (Hybritech) in San Diego, where he managed 5 different research groups developing numerous medical diagnostic tests using a new monoclonal antibody technology. Dr. Myrtle gained particular recognition in the diagnostic and medical community for his involvement in the development and introduction of a unique new medical test, the prostate specific antigen test (PSA), which revolutionized the early detection, treatment, and management of prostate cancer. He subsequently held positions as Director, Medical Research for Roche Diagnostics, and also at Chiron Diagnostics. In 1998, as Vice President, Clinical Affairs, Dr. Myrtle was involved in starting a medical device company in Boston, MA. The device employs visible and ultraviolet wavelengths of light and mathematical algorithms to optically probe and diagnose pre-cancerous cellular lesions such as cervical intraepithelial neoplasia without even touching the patient.

Dr. Myrtle married his UCLA sweetheart, and they have three children. Dr. Myrtle and his oldest son were champion sailors (catamarans), and he can frequently be found running the Strand at 5:00 am in Manhattan Beach.