Patricia Buffler, Ph.D.

Patricia Buffler, Ph.D., an AACR member since 2003, died on Sept. 26 at the age of 75. She held the Kenneth and Marjorie Kaiser chair in cancer epidemiology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Buffler, a former dean at UC Berkeley’s School of Public Health, was known for her research on childhood leukemia and environmental health. She led several large research programs related to leukemia and other childhood cancers, including the California Childhood Leukemia Study, which she launched in 1995. The study, one of the largest in the world, examined the relationship between the development of leukemia in children and diet, genes, infections, and environmental exposures. Her research findings included the increased risk of acute lymphoblastic leukemia associated with diagnostic X-rays.

In 2006, Buffler established the Childhood Leukemia International Consortium, which currently includes more than 30 investigators from 22 epidemiological studies of childhood leukemia underway in 14 countries.

Although known for her research on childhood cancers, Buffler also investigated other environmental health issues, such as the effects of electromagnetic radiation. She chaired a scientific advisory panel formed by the Semiconductor Industry Association. The industry discontinued use of most toxic chemicals following the results of the panel’s final report.

Born Aug. 1, 1938, in Doylestown, Pa., Buffler received her bachelor’s degree in nursing and biology in 1960 from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She worked as a public health nurse in New York, N.Y. before moving to California, where she continued to work as a public health nurse. In 1965, Buffler received her master’s degree in public health at UC Berkeley, and her doctorate in epidemiology in 1973.

Buffler served on the faculty in various capacities at The University of Texas from 1974 to 1991. She joined the faculty at UC Berkeley in 1991, where she started new programs, such as Health and Social Behavior and Public Health Nutrition.

Buffler was a member of the AACC’s Molecular Epidemiology and Women in Cancer Research working groups. Notable achievements throughout her career include membership in the Institute of Medicine and the American College of Epidemiology. Additionally, she was named to the Texas Women Hall of Fame and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.