

Obituary and Accomplishments as reported by:

The New York Times

H. Sherwood Lawrence, 87, Immunology Pioneer

By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN

Published: April 8, 2004

Dr. H. Sherwood Lawrence, a pioneering immunologist who helped found the branch of biology that explores the function of lymphocytes, a type of white cell in blood and lymph nodes, died on Monday in Manhattan. He was 87.

His death was announced by officials of New York University, where he had taught and conducted research for more than 50 years.

Dr. Lawrence, who was known as Jerry, was also an expert in infectious diseases, and his research generated other advances in immunology. Dr. Lawrence conducted research on the way the body rejects transplanted organs and how various conditions can damage tissue.

Dr. Lawrence was best known for his discovery, in 1949, of a substance known as "transfer factor," a product of T-lymphocytes, which play crucial roles in defending against a wide variety of infectious agents.

He named the product after showing that the type of immune response that lymphocytes could transfer to nonimmune animals could sometimes be transferred to enhance the body's defenses.

Transfer factor is a small molecule, and it has been the center of scientific mystery, in part because Dr. Lawrence and other scientists were unable to identify it precisely. Some scientists suspect that transfer factor represents bits of many molecules.

"Although there was significant controversy surrounding transfer factor, Jerry doggedly pursued the concept of immune reconstitution that has become a very important field of immunology," said Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Dr. Lawrence predicted many aspects of the functioning of lymphocytes and immune cells, and his work provided clues to the later discovery of immune substances known as cytokines.

Dr. Lawrence also identified a link between the way cells respond immunologically to microbes like the bacterium that causes tuberculosis and the type of immune responses involved in the rejection of transplanted organs, said Dr. Fred T. Valentine, an immunologist who worked with Dr. Lawrence at N.Y.U.

Henry Sherwood Lawrence was born in Astoria, Queens. He graduated from New York University in 1938 and its medical school in 1943.

After a year's internship, Dr. Lawrence served in the Navy in World War II as a medical officer aboard a number of ships. He participated in the Normandy invasion at Omaha Beach and in the invasions of southern France and Okinawa, Japan, and received Bronze Stars in each.

After the war, he completed his training as a specialist in internal medicine at New York University and joined its medical faculty in 1949.

In 1959, he became head of infectious diseases and immunology, a position he held until his retirement in 2000. He was co-director of medical services at Bellevue and New York University Hospitals from 1964 to 2000.

Dr. Lawrence was also director of N.Y.U.'s cancer center from 1974 to 1979, and director of its AIDS research center from 1989 to 1994.

Dr. Lawrence was the founding editor of the journal Cellular Immunology and a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Lawrence is survived by his wife, the former Dorothea Wetherbee; a daughter, Dorothea Lawrence Browne of New York City; two sons, Dr. Victor John of Greenwich, Conn., and Geoffrey Douglas of Lawrenceville, N.J.; and four grandchildren.