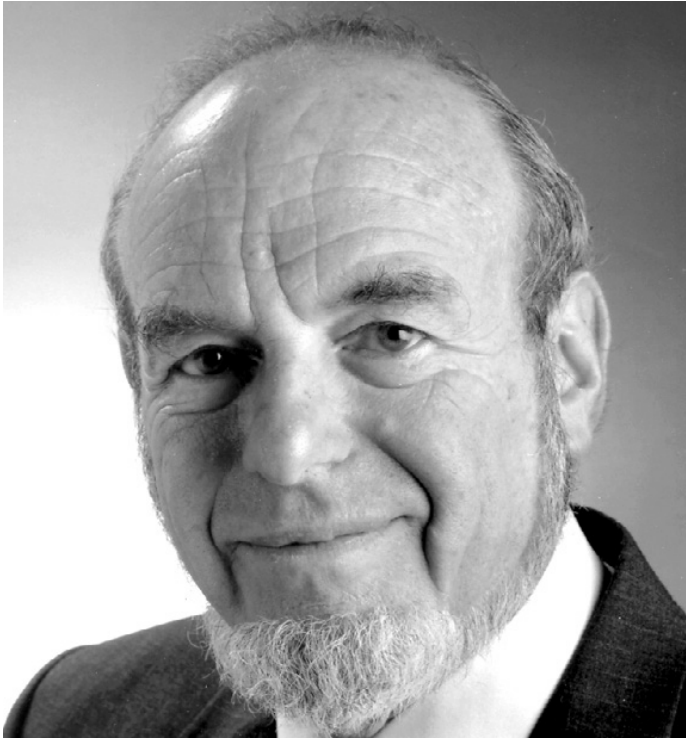




Edgar Haber



On October 13, 1997, Harvard Medical School, the Harvard School of Public Health, and academic medicine, worldwide, lost the being of Dr. Edgar Haber, one of the most brilliant medical scientists of the modern era.

Born in 1932 in Berlin, Germany, Edgar Haber came to New York with his family when he was seven years old. His college education, which he completed in three years, was at Columbia where he majored in philosophy. He then progressed to receive his M.D. in 1956, also from Columbia. A residency in medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital (M.G.H) was next, succeeded by three years at the N.I.H. where he worked with Dr. Christian Anfinsen, who had established that the three-dimensional structure of ribonuclease is

dictated by the information in the sequence of amino acids. Dr. Haber then went on to London, working for a year under Dr. Aubrey Leatham at St. George's Hospital.

In 1964 when, aged only thirty-two, through the efforts of Dr. Walter Bauer, he was appointed to the position of Chief of the Cardiac Unit at the M.G.H. The Unit had been one of the first in the nation, being headed initially by the pioneering cardiologist, Dr. Paul Dudley White, then by his long-time associate, Dr. Edward F. Bland. Both were primarily clinicians, and the selection of an individual trained in cellular and molecular science was a radical departure. At the time that Dr. Haber assumed the position, the Cardiac Unit consisted of seven staff members. When he left twenty-four years later, the Unit had expanded in personnel to fifty-two staff positions and fifty-seven clinical and research fellows.

Dr. Haber was a superb immunochemist, one of the first people to apply the techniques of basic science to cardiology. He had a far-reaching research agenda. From his laboratory came a radioimmunoassay for digitalis glycosides now in worldwide use as a diagnostic test, and development of antibodies against

digoxin that can be used clinically to treat digoxin toxicity. He and his colleagues also developed radioimmunoassays for angiotensin and renin and employed antibodies for cardiac imaging. There were many other notable contributions, wherein he was the author or co-author of over five hundred scientific publications.

Dr. Haber was an eminent mentor, training scores of young people who now occupy positions of leadership the world over. During the same interval that his research flourished, he recruited outstanding clinicians and developed strong clinical units in the subspecialties of cardiology, notably cardiac catheterization, cardiac ultrasound, electrophysiology, nuclear imaging, and preventive cardiology. It was entirely appropriate that he was named the Higginson Professor of Medicine at the Medical School.

His twenty-four-year career at the M.G.H. terminated in 1988 when he became President of the Squibb Institute for Medical Research, with a mandate to create a world class scientific organization in order to generate new drugs with the potential of the first angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor. Dr. Haber was firmly convinced that great science would translate into the discovery of breakthrough drugs. His goal was to create collaborations between Squibb scientists and first-rate laboratories around the world that would provide insights into disease mechanisms that could be translated into new therapies. This he did rapidly while creating great excitement and enthusiasm among Squibb scientists and research laboratories. At the same time, he proceeded to increase the staff at Squibb and to introduce new technologies that were necessary for rapid discovery of drugs. Dr. Haber was the major architect of the union of the Squibb and Bristol Myers' research and development organizations during the merger of the two companies. He was a guiding spirit with an emphasis on quality in leadership and scientific excellence.

His capacity for work was legendary. At seminars, he was famous for appearing to fall asleep midway through the presentation, but would wake up instantly at the end and clearly demonstrate that he had heard every word by asking the most penetrating questions from the audience.

In 1990, Dr. Haber relinquished his position with the pharmaceutical industry, and, with the goal of creating a world-renowned laboratory for the study of cardiovascular disease, secured \$23.5 million in committed research funds from Bristol-Myers-Squibb. To re-acquaint himself with the latest techniques in molecular biology as applied to hypertension, he took a sabbatical leave in Professor Pierre Corvol's laboratory at the College de France in Paris. His plan was to establish a laboratory at the Harvard School of Public Health that would discover critical genes which predisposed individuals to heart disease, to explain their mechanism of action, and to develop novel methods to interrupt their consequences.

Sensing a unique opportunity for taking a multidisciplinary approach (biological, epidemiological, and behavioral), Dr. Haber created the Center for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease. For example, following up on epidemiological insights, he focused on elucidating the biological mechanisms

through which homocysteine increases the risk of atherosclerosis arterial disease, and also by which progesterone protects humans from that penurious malady. In 1997, five years after the opening of the Center's Cardiovascular Biology Laboratory, Dr. Haber's trainees from around the world gathered to toast his success at a scientific symposium in honor of his sixty-fifth birthday. In addition to directing the Center, he assumed the leadership of the Division of Biological Sciences at the School of Public Health as the Elkan R. Blout Professor of Biological Sciences.

Edgar Haber was not only a brilliant imaginative scientist – he was also gifted in many other directions. He was a major enthusiast for and supporter of baroque music, and subscribed to many, early music concert series. He was a devotee of visual art, especially drawings and etchings, and had, at home, a marvelous collection including examples by Rembrandt and Durer. He was a connoisseur of fine wines, and possessed an enviable cellar. He relished his homes in New Hampshire and in France. All in all, a most remarkable human being whose talents we shall sorely miss.

Dr. Haber died of multiple myeloma at the M.G.H. on October 13, 1997. He is survived by his devoted wife, Carol Avery Haber, and by their three sons, Justin A., Graham S., and Eben M.

Harvard University and clinical research, worldwide, join the Haber family in mourning the premature loss of this brilliant investigator who brought so much to so many.

Respectfully submitted,

Roman W. DeSanctis

David G. Nathan

Guy L. Reed

William Scott

Oglesby Paul, *Chairman*