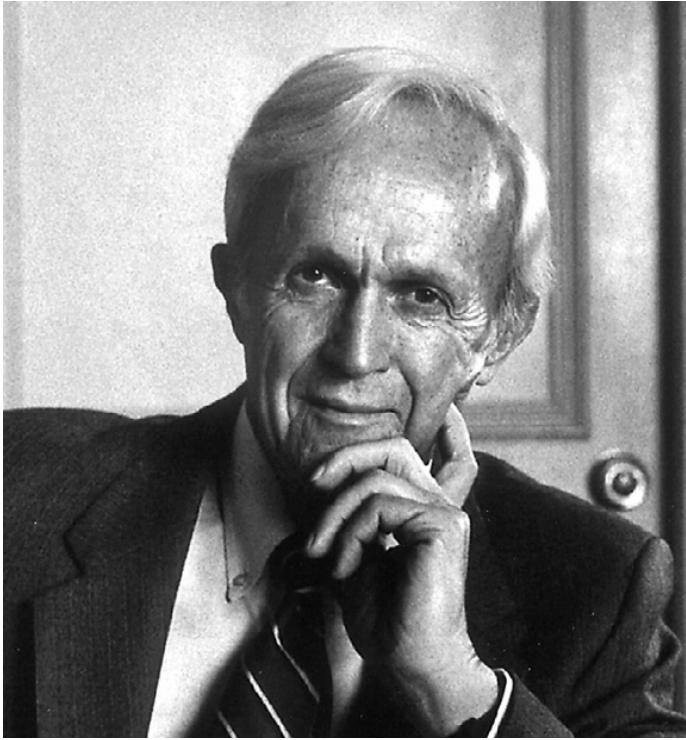




Melvin Lester Taymor



Melvin L. Taymor (Mel) will be remembered for his many contributions to fertility research and for the clinician-scientists whom he trained during his 40 years of service at Harvard Medical School. He was an outstanding clinician who treated infertile couples with great sensitivity while providing state-of-the-art care. Thus, he helped many a couple achieve a family who otherwise would have gone childless. He and his colleagues defined the application of the measurement of beta-human chorionic gonadotropin to predict pregnancy outcome and to detect ectopic pregnancy. His laboratory explored the maturation of human oocytes *in vitro*, thus anticipating the field of assisted reproductive technology which has become the centerpiece of clinical reproductive medicine and infertility.

Mel was born in Brockton, Massachusetts. He received his B.A. from Johns Hopkins University in 1940 and his M.D. from Tufts University in 1943. After completing service in the U.S. Navy during World War II, he became a surgical resident at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and trained in pathology at the Free Hospital for Women. He was a fellow in reproductive biology at Massachusetts General Hospital where he worked with Drs. Fred Simmons and Janet McArthur. In 1956, he joined the surgical staff of the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital whence he became the Chief of Gynecology at the Brigham in 1970 and the Director of Reproductive Endocrinology at the Beth Israel Hospital, Boston in 1977 serving in that capacity until 1987. In 1981, Mel was appointed Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Harvard Medical School.

Mel was the quintessential clinical investigator of his time. He focused on translating ideas from the laboratory bench to the bedside. His productivity is easily measured by the 120 research articles and 6 texts he prepared. Most of his work focused on understanding the endocrinology of the menstrual cycle

*In tribute to their dedicated efforts to science and medicine, deceased members of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine (those at the rank of full or emeritus professor) receive a review of their life and contributions with a complete reflection, a **Memorial Minute**.*

and ovulation, and the development of improved protocols for inducing ovulation in infertile women. In 1959, Mel was among the first investigators to report the clinical use of urinary measurement of luteinizing hormone (LH) as an accurate method for predicting ovulation and identifying the fertile portion of the cycle. Twenty-five years later, with the invention of monoclonal antibody based immunoassays, a large industry grew around the idea of urinary LH detection kits to time ovulation. In 1962, Taymor confirmed, in a large series of subjects, McArthur's finding in four subjects that LH levels were elevated in women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). He was also among the first investigators to recognize that circulating progesterone increased prior to ovulation, and therefore played a role in the ovulatory process. In the early 1970's, he focused on the uses of the recently discovered decapeptide, GnRH, in fertility therapy. In the 1970's, my (Dr. Barbieri's) laboratory was across the hall from Taymor's in the Laboratory of Human Reproduction and Reproductive Biology at Harvard Medical School. I (Dr. Barbieri) was fascinated by the progress Taymor was making in understanding the biology of the human oocyte obtained from pre-ovulatory follicles. Mel understood that human oocyte maturation, including germinal vesicle breakdown and polar body formation, could occur *in vitro* in a simple culture medium. In the 1970's, local laws restricted active fertilization of these mature oocytes, but with the easing of these restrictions, Dr. Taymor's group was the first in New England to produce a successful pregnancy by IVF.

Mel will long be remembered for his skills as a clinical educator and research mentor. He trained numerous reproductive endocrinologists, including Drs. Merle Berger, Irwin Thompson, Thomas Kosasa, William Patton, Elwyn Grimes, Mabelle Seibel, Marvin Yussman, T. Aono, S. G. Raj, M. K. Sanyal, Selwyn Oskowitz, Michael Alper, and Steve Bayer. Mel leaves his wife Betty and three children, Michael, a pediatrician in Palo Alto, Laurie a community activist in Cambridge and Julie a renowned theatre director-designer. Julie received a "genius award" from the McArthur Foundation for her work in theatre production and two Tony awards as the director of the Broadway production of *The Lion King*. Mel's colleagues, students and family will forever miss his guiding spirit and gentle leadership.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Barbieri, *Chairperson*

Merle Berger

Donald Goldstein

Isaac Schiff