



Edward “Ted” W. Webster



Edward (“Ted”) W. Webster, Ph.D., 83, Professor Emeritus of Radiology (Physics) Harvard Medical School (HMS), passed away on Saturday, December 17th, 2005. He will be remembered both for his many scientific contributions and his friendly, warm and supportive manner. Dr. Webster retired in 2001 after 47 years of service with the Departments of Radiology at HMS and Massachusetts General Hospital. He is survived by his wife of forty-four years, Dorothea and six children, John, Peter, Anne, Edward, Mark and Susan; a sister, Margaret Bates; and six grandchildren.

Ted was born on April 12, 1922 in London, England in very modest circumstances. His father, a post-office worker, encouraged him to pursue academic achievement that led eventually to his attending the University of London as a scholarship student. He received a B.Sc. degree in Electrical Engineering with First Class Honors in 1943 and stayed on for graduate research receiving his Ph.D. in 1946. After working for several years in England he ventured to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for post-doctoral study in high voltage engineering. There he joined a

collaborative program between MIT’s high voltage accelerator group and Lahey Clinic to develop high-voltage electron and photon radiation dosimetry methods. Thus began Ted’s long career in Medical Physics. After a brief return to England he came again to the United States to accept a position as Medical Physicist at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) department of Radiology in 1953. He was, at that time, the only physicist in the department, supporting both Radiation Oncology and Diagnostic Radiology clinical activities.

His research interests at that time included the application of electron beams to radiation therapy; a field in which he made important early pioneering contributions. As time went on his interests expanded to include diagnostic radiology and when Radiation Oncology at MGH became a separate department he stayed in radiology as the director of the Division of Radiological Sciences; a position he held until his

retirement in 2001. Over the years his research evolved into diagnostic imaging and radiation dosimetry and eventually to both the scientific and societal aspects of radiation effects. Over his career he became a pioneer and world-renowned contributor in the latter field as evidenced by his more than one hundred thirty publications, numerous invited lectures, academic debates and other activities.

Ted was also a pioneer in the field of radiology education and was instrumental in the development of the American Board of Radiology's Radiological Physics curriculum and examination system. He achieved certification in that organization in 1957 and soon after became an examiner in Physics. He served the board for more than twenty-six years and during his tenure contributed significantly to the design of the examination process. He served as an examiner for fifteen hundred radiologists and physicists during that time. Ted also founded and directed the New England Roentgen Ray Society's course in radiological physics which for more than twenty years was a primary vehicle for the training of Radiology Residents in the New England region.

During his years at MGH he was appointed Radiation Safety Officer (1962-1980), Chairman of the Radiation Safety and Radioactive Drug Research Committees and the Committee on Research (1964-2001). During his long career he instructed radiology residents at Harvard University, Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Public Health, and Northeastern University.

He also served the field through his extensive activities in professional societies and government throughout his long career. He was a founding member of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine, served on its first board of directors and as its fifth president in 1964. He served on multiple committees of the National Council on Radiation Protection from 1961 to 1993 and authored a number of reference works published by that organization. He served as a member of the USFDA Beir III Committee that defined many of the modern ideas concerning radiation effects and numerous other national and international committees on Radiology and radiation effects from 1961-1995. These include The International Atomic Energy Agency, The International Council on Radiation Effects and Measurement, The World Health Organization, The International Council on Radiation Protection and The Atomic Bomb Casualty Committee.

Ted received many prestigious awards in acknowledgement of his contributions to the fields of Radiology and Radiological Physics. Some of the more notable of these include the Coolidge Award of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (1983), the Gold Medal of the American College of Radiology (1991) and the Lauriston S. Taylor Award of the National Council on Radiation Protection (1992),

He began his career when Radiological Physics was a new and formative field and was a major force in its development and growth for almost fifty years. His contributions will continue to shape the field for many years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

James Thrall, *Chair*
John Correia, *Co-Chair*
Ron Callahan
Gordon Brownell
Beth Haire