On the Beat

Obituary

Dr. Robert Wissler, a renowned preventive pathologist and professor emeritus in the department of pathology at the University of Chicago, died from respiratory failure at the end of last year. He was 89 years old.

Dr. Robert Wissler

In his early studies, Dr. Wissler explored the role of specific dietary fats in atherosclerosis. This pioneering research paved the way to an understanding of the relationship between diet and the development, treatment, and prevention of cardiovascular disease, and he became an ardent advocate for changes and improvements in the American diet.

In 1983, he organized a large, multicenter study, the Pathobiological Determinants of Atherosclerosis in Youth (PDAY), to examine the risk factors associated with coronary heart disease in young men between the ages of 15 and 34 years.

By studying the blood vessels from about 3,000 young men who had died, the researchers found a strong correlation between smoking and elevated cholesterol levels and atherosclerosis. The findings suggested that even in young, healthy men, the effects of smoking and high cholesterol were "more than additive."

He also performed some of the early studies that examined the roles of the smooth muscle cells that line vessels and of the immune system, especially the macrophage, in the development of arterial disease.

Dr. Wissler graduated from Earlham College in Richmond, Ind., in 1939, majoring in biology and chemistry, and went on to study medicine at the University of Chicago. During World War II, he left the school but remained on campus to work on a research project on nutrition and immune function. He returned to the school after the war, and received his doctorate in pathology in 1946, joined the pathology faculty in 1947, and earned his medical degree in 1948.

Still at Chicago, he completed his residency and fellowship training in 1953, working his way up from professor in the department of pathology, to chairman from 1957 to 1972. From 1972 to 1981, he served as director of the Specialized Center of Research in Atherosclerosis at Chicago.

In addition to earning substantial respect and recognition for his groundbreaking research, Dr. Wissler was a dedicated educator, known and valued for his generosity toward students and colleagues alike.

On the Move

Dr. Barry F. Uretsky, an interventional cardiologist known for his work on blood flow regulation, has been appointed director of cardiology at Sparks Health System.

In his new position at Sparks, which is an integrated health-care system based in Fort Smith, Ark., Dr. Uretsky will oversee the administration of all areas of cardiology in his capacities as medical director of cardiology for the Sparks Regional Medical Center and as medical director of The Cardiology Center at Sparks. He also will continue practicing as an interventional cardiologist.

Before assuming his new position, Dr. Uretsky was the director of interventional cardiology and the cardiovascular catheterization laboratory at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

Dr. Barry F. Uretsky

In addition to his work on hemodynamics, Dr. Uretsky's other areas of clinical interest include the evaluation of interventional devices and the development of alternative algorithms for interventional strategies, congestive heart failure and its management, and intracoronary imaging.

He received his medical degree from Temple University School of Medicine, Philadelphia, in 1972, then completed his residency in internal medicine at Boston City Hospital.

He was a fellow in cardiology at Boston City as well as the Boston University Medical Center. Dr. Uretsky then moved to the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, where he was associate professor, codirected the cardiac catheterization laboratories at Presbyterian University Hospital, Pittsburgh, and was director of the cardiac catheterization laboratories at Westmoreland Regional Hospital, Greensburg, Pa., before joining the University of Texas Medical Branch in 1995.

—Renée Matthews