

## Ernest Witebsky

ERNEST WITEBSKY died suddenly on December 7, 1969. His research of over 45 years successfully bridged classic immunology with the modern approaches to this science.

Ernest Witebsky was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1901. In 1920–1926 he studied medicine at the Universities of Frankfurt and Heidelberg. During his medical studies and after graduation, Ernest Witebsky became interested in immunologic research to which he devoted his entire life. Following graduation, he joined the University of Heidelberg where he was associated with Dr. Hans Sachs. In Heidelberg,



Dr. Witebsky performed studies on specific antigenic structures of various tissues, including brain, pituitary, adrenal and thyroid. These studies greatly contributed to the creation of the field of research on tissue specificity. Studies on blood groups were also initiated at Heidelberg by demonstration of ABO antigens in tissues and cells other than erythrocytes.

Expelled from Germany by the Nazi regime, Dr. Witebsky found his new home in Buffalo, New York, where, in 1936, he joined the Medical School of the University of Buffalo. From 1941 to 1967 he was Professor and Chairman of the Department of Bacteriology and Immunology. In Buffalo he continued his studies on blood groups, which led to the development of procedures for isolation and partial characterization of A and B antigens. He also developed methods of employing blood group substances for neutralization of antibodies in the blood of universal blood donors and for production of antisera used as typing reagents.

Since the early 1950s, Dr. Witebsky devoted most of his research activities to studies on autoimmunity. The experimental model of autoimmune thyroiditis greatly contributed to the understanding of mechanisms operating in diseases mediated by immunologic mechanisms. In the last three years of his life, he extended these studies to hereditary autoimmune thyroiditis.

Dr. Witebsky was a most talented and devoted teacher. Besides conducting numerous courses at the University of Buffalo (presently The State University of New York at Buffalo), he shared his knowledge and experience with his associates. He was one of the first to recognize the importance of team work in medical research. He created, in Buffalo, one of the world's leading schools

of immunology. In recognition of the scientific achievements of Ernest Witebsky and his associates, the authorities of The State University of New York created The Center for Immunology in Buffalo in 1967 and appointed Dr. Witebsky as its first director.

Dr. Witebsky was a member of many national and international societies for microbiology and immunology. He was the recipient of many distinguished awards including the Karl Landsteiner Award which was bestowed upon him in 1959.—*Felix Milgrom, M.D.*



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