

Obituary

HENRY S. KAPLAN

Director of the Cancer Biology Research Laboratory,
Stanford University, CA, U.S.A.

HENRY Kaplan died after a severe illness on 5 February 1984 at his home in Stanford at the age of 65 yr. A member of our Editorial Board, he was known and admired by many for his outstanding contributions to radiology, radiation biology, tumor virology and cancer research in general.

Kaplan's highly sophisticated and systematic pursuance of the application of megavolt irradiation to the treatment of Hodgkin's disease has been a major contribution to the striking improvement of the prognosis of this disease during the past decades. His personal approach to solving the problem of the lymphomas was an exceptionally thorough one. Since his early scientific career he had been engaged in both experimental studies with animals and clinical research. His studies of more than 30 yr ago on the induction of thymic lymphomas in mice by weekly fractions of total-body irradiation are classical: the Kaplan irradiation regimen is still being applied by those who employ this model. In the course of the years Henry succeeded in unravelling the mechanism of induction of those lymphomas by discovering with Lieberman the retrovirus RADLV and many of the present generation of tumor virologists have spent time in Henry's laboratory participating in this exciting line of research.

Although his main interest remained the lymphomas in all their aspects, he inspired his collaborators to investigate numerous other subjects in radiation biology and oncology. To mention just a few that received international recognition: the investigations on the radiosensitizing effects of BUDr in bacteria and cultured mammalian cells and the extensive research on the application of total lymph-node irradiation as an immune suppressive treatment for the conditioning of recipients of organ and bone marrow grafts. He also showed an active interest in the development of new radiation sources: in the early days megavoltage X-rays and more recently the application of high-energy neutrons and pi-mesons.

Henry was a real leader in several fields of medical research. He had been president of the American Association for Cancer Research (1966–1967); of the Association of University Radiologists (1954–1957); of the Radiation Research Society (1956–1957); and of the International Society for Radiation Research (1974–1979).

It was in this latter capacity that I had the stimulating experience of serving under him as the secretary-general. I got to know him in that role as the same personality we all knew so well from numerous encounters at scientific meetings or in the laboratory: well informed, careful in making his decisions but always in full command of the situation. But he earned my even higher respect by being one of the few American oncologists who openly opposed the organisation of the 12th International Cancer Congress in Buenos Aires in 1968 on the grounds that the violations of human rights at that time in Argentina were incompatible with a large-scale international gathering devoted to the alleviation of human suffering from disease. As the only American delegate he joined a small but determined party, led by Schwarzenberg from Paris, which travelled to Buenos Aires and attempted to negotiate the liberation of political prisoners with the Junta. I shall never forget his courage and grim determination during that mission, which ended with all of us being expelled from the country. It is gratifying to have known Henry Kaplan. We are mourning his untimely decease, sharing the grief with his wife Leah and his two children.

D. W. VAN BEKKUM