

Obituary

PROFESSOR LESLIE ALDERMAN ELSON

LESLIE ELSON, Professor of Biochemistry of Drug Action of the University of London, based at the Chester Beatty Research Institute, died peacefully on 25 July 1985, after a long illness. He will be remembered with affection by his many friends and colleagues in cancer research. He was born in Coalville, Leicestershire in the U.K. in 1907, and graduated at London University after obtaining his Ph.D. Degree in 1951 and D.Sc. in 1958. He later became Reader in Biochemistry based at the Chester Beatty Research Institute in 1956 and Professor in 1967.

As a biochemist he was well known, particularly for the Elson-Morgan reaction. He later formed part of Sir Alexander Haddow's fine team at the Chester Beatty. The brilliant chemists developed the first useful anticancer drugs, such as the nitrogen mustard Chlorambucil and the antileukemic drug Myleran. Leslie Elson was engaged in assessing the side-effects of these drugs on the bone marrow and blood. Through his work more drugs emerged with less side-effects for treating patients.

Professor Franz Bergel emphasized the need to carry out more direct studies of human cancers experimentally. Leslie Elson then became Chairman of the Pre-clinical and Clinical Pharmacology Co-operative Group of the European Organization for Research in Treatment of Cancer (EORTC), then a Council Member of the EORTC, Chairman of the Co-ordinating Committee for Human Tumour Investigations (1962-1971) and then Honorary President from 1971. On his retirement from the Chester Beatty in 1972 he continued research on the problem of smoking and cancer but finally moved to Seaford in Sussex with his wife.

Leslie Elson made a notable contribution to the cancer field and to the improved treatment of cancer patients. He will be remembered by those of us who knew him in the U.K., on the Continent of Europe and in other countries as a fine person who worked quietly but successfully over many years for the benefit of cancer patients. He will be missed by us all.

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