

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS FRED JOSEPH ANSFIELD

A pioneer in the use of drugs for the treatment of cancer, Fred Ansfield, passed away at the age of 86 in Milwaukee where he had grown up and where he continued to care for cancer patients at St. Mary's Hospital after retirement from the University of Wisconsin Department of Human Oncology in 1977. Not large in stature but big in spirit, Dr. Ansfield's life experiences included being orphaned as an early teenager, self-support during the depression as a college/medical student, solo country medical practice, decoration as a war hero and renown as a clinical cancer investigator and UW faculty member. Fred is remembered by his faculty associates for his extraordinary dedication to and kindness with his patients and their families. He shall be remembered by cancer treatment specialists everywhere as one of the founders of Medical Oncology.

Fred Ansfield was born in 1910, the last of a family of six children. Both his parents had died of cancer by the time he was thirteen. Despite the disruptions of their family life, the roaring twenties and the great depression, three of the five Ansfield brothers managed to work their way to graduation from the University of Wisconsin.

Fred received his M.D. from the UW Medical School in 1933 in a class of unusual significance to the history of cancer research and treatment at the University and internationally. Among his classmates was Professor Harold Rusch, founding director of both the UW's McArdle Laboratories for Cancer Research and the University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center. Another classmate was UW Professor Fred Mohs who developed chemosurgery, a technique of particular importance in the treatment of cancers of the skin. And yet another was Anthony Curreri, UW Professor of Surgery and an organizer of the Division of Clinical Oncology, the first UW unit devoted to the application of drugs to cancer treatment.

On graduation, young Dr. Ansfield accepted a position as physician to a Civilian Conservation Corps camp near Glidden in northern Wisconsin. The "CCC" was a New Deal organization designed to employ depression-idled young men in conservation tasks on federal lands. In Glidden, Fred fell in love with Wisconsin's north woods as well as with one of its daughters, Ruth Beaser, who soon became his wife.

Fred's medical practice in Glidden was interrupted when he entered the army early in the World War II. He served as physician to an army airborne glider unit in the campaign to retake the Philippine Islands. His gallantry under fire was recognized by award of both a Bronze Star and a Silver Star, and his wounds by award of a Purple Heart. However, he rarely spoke of his military experiences with his family or friends.

The Ansfield family returned to Glidden after Fred's discharge, and he established a busy general practice. An early interest in the possibility of a cancer treatment modality other than surgery or radiotherapy reawakened, however. Fred discussed the possible utilization of the immune system in cancer therapy with his classmate, Professor Harold Rusch. Drs. Ansfield and Rusch designed a series of experiments on immunotherapy. Fred would drive to the UW where mice with experimental tumors were ready for treatment. He would start the treatment, load boxes with the mice into his car and return to Glidden where he'd observe the results of the treatment on the tumor growth. Although these experiments had limited success, they intensified Ansfield's interest in clinical cancer research.

Dr. Ansfield accepted an instructorship in the Clinical Oncology Division of the Department of Surgery in 1957, and rose to full professor by 1964. Fred's first task on joining the UW faculty was to test a new

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potential chemotherapeutic drug that had been developed by Prof. Charles Heidelberger of the McArdle Laboratory. This drug, 5-FU (5-fluorouracil), was the first anticancer agent to be conceptualized and synthesized; other early anticancer drugs were, like antibiotics, extracted from natural products. Dr. Ansfield found that 5-FU was effective against advanced colon cancer, a disease that defied other treatments. He performed clinical trials to develop protocols that maximized the therapeutic actions of 5-FU while minimizing the drug's damage to normal tissues. These became the national standard for the use of 5-FU, which is still among the drugs in treatment mixtures for a variety of advanced cancer types.

Fred Ansfield authored two volumes on cancer chemotherapy which influenced the training and medical practices of many young physicians in the developing subspecialty of Medical Oncology. Recognizing the need for a national organization devoted to the full-time practitioners of the young subspecialty, Ansfield and two other cancer physicians founded the American Society for Clinical Oncology; ASCO is a major professional organization today. He authored or co-authored important research manuscripts on FU and other chemotherapeutic agents, and pioneered in collaborative studies of combined modality cancer treatment. In 1975, Dr. Ansfield became a founding member of the new Department of Human Oncology which served as the core for development of the UW Clinical Cancer Center. He accepted emeritus status only after chemotherapy had become an important tool in cancer therapy, and the UW Comprehensive Cancer Center was well along in its development.

Fred Ansfield continued to practice medicine in Milwaukee and Glidden as long as his health allowed. He and Ruth Ansfield and their son, Valentine, a professor of geology at the University of South Dakota, and daughter, Toby, a clinical psychologist in Milwaukee, frequently indulged their love of the north woods at their hideaway near Buffalo Lake.

The University of Wisconsin is the richer and cancer patients worldwide are the better for Professor Fred Joseph Ansfield's life.

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