

Obituary

WILLIAM H. WOGLOM
(1879–1953)

Dr. William H. Woglom, one of the apostles of the individualistic approach to the problems of science by the man of general cultural attainments, died August 8, 1953. The contributions of Dr. Woglom to cancer research were made in that intermediate era from 1910 to 1940. The first productive impetus to the experimental study of neoplasia had occurred in the earlier years of the century. It then appeared plausible that progressive refinements of existing knowledge of various transmissible tumors in animals would afford a complete understanding of their biologic activity, and that this might lead directly to a comprehension of the etiology, and possibly, as a corollary, to the treatment of human cancer. The likelihood that experimental tumors might be created at will in the laboratory had as yet only been suspected. It could hardly have been surmised that the ability to induce neoplasia, while endowing researchers with some understanding of the variety of etiologic factors that seem to cooperate in the production of cancer, in the end, would only open newer, more difficult avenues for study. Dr. Woglom inherited the problems of this early era, studied their innumerable facets vigorously but skeptically, and contributed much to an appreciation of their complexities. The quiet, reserved personality of Dr. Woglom fitted admirably with his philosophy that careful, patient accumulation of facts by devoted, but critical investigators, however small and unrelated these building stones might appear, offered the only possible method that might lead to successful exploration of the unknown. When the unknown was an almost unapproachable enigma as cancer and the path to its comprehension completely hidden, the method of Dr. Woglom had much to offer. Mass-coordinated study under the dominating, arbitrary, or possibly even benign, directing hand of a single all-responsible head was without appeal to Dr. Woglom. The methodology that coincided with Dr. Woglom's productive years in experimental cancer has been to some measure supplanted by the efforts of a new era dominated by specialists in genetics, chemistry, virology, radiation and allied fields. Prodigious efforts are being made to enlarge the horizons of scientific knowledge. The problem of cancer has defied all efforts of these disciplines, or in the words of Dr. Woglom taken from his book on experimental cancer which appeared in 1913, "... the keenest intellects of two continents have grappled with the question year after year, eternally hoping, yet always baffled." Nevertheless, his optimism as a physician and investigator regarding eventual control of human cancer was reflected in these concluding words of his early book, "... the

dream of effectual interference with incessantly proliferating cells will become an actuality."

Dr. Woglom received his medical degree from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, in 1901. Following his formative years in pathology and bacteriology at the Long Island College Hospital and the New York City Department of Health, he came in 1909 to the cancer research facilities newly founded at Columbia University. These activities subsequently became expanded and were known as the George Crocker Special Research Fund, later the Institute of Cancer Research of Columbia University, and ultimately the Department of Cancer Research under the aegis of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the university. Excepting the fruitful interlude in 1911 and 1912 as assistant to the Director of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in London, Dr. Woglom continued his association with Columbia University until 1946, when he retired as professor emeritus of cancer research.

His sojourn in London left an ineffaceable mark on Dr. Woglom. Bashford, the director there, and his associates, Murray and Russell, became his guides and friends, and throughout his life Dr. Woglom always felt indebted to the cordial stimulation of these scientists. The bond with British investigators was never relaxed in Dr. Woglom. The work of these early years and the general status of knowledge of experimental cancer at that time were admirably described in Dr. Woglom's book, "The Study of Experimental Cancer," which appeared in 1913 under the imprint of the Columbia University Press. This was undoubtedly the most exhaustive treatise of the subject then available and the first of a number of encyclopedic reviews on different aspects of experimental cancer subsequently to be published by Dr. Woglom. Dr. Woglom's extensive command of the world literature and his fine ability for critical analysis made him ideally equipped for such difficult and painstaking tasks. His precise style of scientific writing became a model of lucidity and ease.

This critical literary talent became of singular service in his devoted years of editorship from 1917 to 1922 of the *Journal of Cancer Research*, and as secretary of the editorial committee, or editor of *Cancer Research* from 1942 to 1945. Many whose skill as scientific investigators was hardly matched by their ability to convey ideas clearly and simply were gently aided by Dr. Woglom in their efforts to impart the exact nature of their observations to those having the task of reading and comprehending them. Dr. Woglom received in 1936

a medal from Columbia University for conspicuous alumni service.

Dr. Woglom for many years participated actively in the affairs of the American Association for Cancer Research, as member of the council, secretary-treasurer, vice-president and eventually, as president in 1937. He was a member of many learned societies, a past president of the New York Pathologic Society, and a member from 1941 to 1946 of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the International Cancer Research Foundation. He cultivated a lifelong interest in photography, was a former president of the New York Camera Club, and an associate of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain.

In the later years of his life Dr. Woglom devoted an enlarging attention to many literary studies. These he carried on avidly following his retirement. Among his contributions are a translation from the French of Oberling's "The Riddle of Cancer," a translation from the German of Golo Mann's, "Secretary of Europe, the Life of Frederick Gentz," and a translation from the German of Ernst Cassirer's monumental work "The Problem of Knowledge." The interesting story by Dr. Woglom of medical contributions made by nonmembers of the profession was told in a book he called, "Discoverers for Medicine."

MILTON J. EISEN

Cancer Research

The Journal of Cancer Research (1916–1930) | The American Journal of Cancer (1931–1940)

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Milton J. Eisen

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