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With the death of Otto Warburg on August 3, 1970, the world of cancer research lost one of its most illustrious and colorful practitioners.

Otto Heinrich Warburg was born on October 8, 1883, into a family famous in science and commerce. He studied chemistry under the great Emil Fischer and, following the receipt of the doctorate in chemistry in 1906, obtained the doctorate in medicine in 1911. Since 1931, he has been the Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Cell Physiology in Berlin-Dahlem. In a long life devoted to studies of life processes, he has been a pioneer in the application of physicochemical principles to studies of tissue and cell metabolism. The manometric apparatus for respiratory studies that bears his name has been used so widely as to have become virtually a symbol of biochemistry. Among his epoch-making discoveries are the respiratory pigments and their associated enzymes and the nicotinamide adenine dinucleotides. He is renowned particularly for his forceful, although controversial, theories on the metabolism of cancer cells and the mechanisms of photosynthesis.

His controversial theory of respiratory impairment of cancer cells, formulated as a result of his prodigious experimental work during the 1920’s, has ever since been a focal point for biochemical investigations on metabolic regulation and has for many years been a guiding principle in attempts at the chemotherapy of cancer. Perhaps no other scientist has had as much impact on cancer research. His early experimental work and theoretical considerations on cancer are collected in his monograph, which first appeared in 1926 under the title Ueber den Staffwechsel den Tumoren. Berlin: Springer, 1926. The English translation appeared in 1930 under the title Metabolism of Tumors (translated by F. Dickens). London: Arnold Constable. His unparalleled contributions to biochemistry and cell physiology have been widely recognized and cited, and he was the recipient of the Nobel Prize in 1931.

The cover photograph of Professor Warburg is reproduced from an original taken in the pre-World War II period, exact date unknown.
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