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The Fox Chase Cancer Center, designated as a Comprehensive Cancer Center by the National Cancer Institute, was created in 1974 by the union of two independent institutions, the Institute for Cancer Research and the American Oncologic Hospital, which occupy the same campus in Northeast Philadelphia. It was the fulfillment of a dream of the late Timothy R. Talbot, Jr., M.D., who became the Center’s first president.

Dr. Talbot came to Fox Chase in 1957 as director of the Institute for Cancer Research, succeeding the founding director, Stanley Reimann. He received his M.D. degree at the University of Pennsylvania, conducted research on the medical consequences of chemical warfare in the Navy in World War II, trained in hematology and oncology at Boston’s Evans Memorial Hospital, did research on leukemia at Memorial Sloan-Kettering/Cornell Medical College, and was a faculty member of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. In 1957 he had just completed a year of research on chemotherapeutic agents with Leslie Elson at the Chester Beatty Institute in London. In terms of experience, Dr. Talbot may have seemed an unlikely leader of an institute dedicated to basic research, but in fact he strongly supported it, maintaining that the Institute’s purpose was “the discovery of new knowledge and the formulation of new concepts,” from which an understanding of cancer could ultimately emerge.

Relinquishing his own medical and scientific pursuits to devote his full attention to institutional matters, Dr. Talbot developed a supportive administration and assumed a selfless role by sacrificing personal achievement for the success of others. During his first seven years he appointed nine new staff members, including five future members of the National Academy of Sciences, one of whom, Baruch S. Blumberg, would become a Nobel Laureate. The attraction for such people to come, and to stay, was Dr. Talbot’s uncompromising personal integrity and his creation of an institution in which staff members at all levels, scientists and nonscientists alike, strongly believed. He constantly labored to sustain a facility where creativity would be fostered and where scientists would be insulated from nonscientific distractions. One such distraction was the pursuit of fiscal support. Dr. Talbot acquired financial support from private and governmental sources, his most significant effort being his negotiations with Kenneth Endicott at the National Cancer Institute that led to a core grant. This was the first of what are now known as the Cancer Support Grants, the intent of which is to stabilize the entire national cancer program.

As president of a new center, Dr. Talbot espoused the principle that basic science should drive such centers but also became interested in advancing clinical oncology and cancer control. The latter he viewed as a particularly fragile entity and consequently campaigned at the national and state levels for emphasis on quality research to ensure the survival of cancer control programs. Similarly, on the clinical front, his creation of a Division of Clinical Research under Blumberg, at the Institute, had anticipated the day when clinical research activities would be included in the Fox Chase Cancer Center.

Dr. Talbot retired from the presidency in 1980 but continued to toil on behalf of his creation until his death on November 7 of last year. The values he assigned to originality and freedom from administrative direction have remained dominant for the staff of the Fox Chase Cancer Center.

The cover shows Timothy R. Talbot, Jr. and the Fox Chase Cancer Center. Thanks are due Alfred G. Knudson, Jr. for the legend and photographs.

Sidney Weinhouse