The appointment of a "Committee on Growth," with membership designed to be broadly representative of the fields concerned in cancer research, both basic and clinical, has already been announced by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. The Committee was created, within the Division of Medical Sciences of the Council, as a result of action by the American Cancer Society designating the Academy as its scientific adviser for research.

The Committee wishes to call the attention of interested investigators to the general outline of endeavor which it proposes to foster and the general principles by which it will be guided. The Committee accepts the interpretation of its field of interest as including reliance on, contact with and support of research in the basic sciences bearing broadly on the whole phenomenon of growth.

The Committee has adopted the following major principles by which, in so far as possible, it will be guided in its sponsorship of research and training programs:

(a) Desirability of long-term grants to projects of major importance.
(b) Grants, where feasible, of such magnitude as to permit individual investigators to appoint associates for long-term training periods.
(c) Granting of fellowships to institutions for training of workers to acquire new technics and wider experience.
(d) Maintenance of continuing individual contact with workers in field.
(e) Provision, on a participating basis, for continuing economic security for professional workers.
(f) Liberal attitude toward the investigator's work, his publication and reports.

To assist it in the fulfillment of its advisory functions the Committee, on its part, will make free use of ad hoc or standing subcommittees in specific fields of interest. Furthermore, it proposes to arrange conferences of competent groups for discussion of problems, for interchange of reports, etc.; make surveys to analyze problems or to determine progress in areas of special interest pertaining to cancer; evaluate, through study by subcommittees and by the main committee, basic and clinical research undertakings, and submit recommendations for support to the American Cancer Society; initiate and plan broad or specific programs of basic and clinical research, through activities of the subcommittees and main committee, and secure the cooperative efforts of investigators in the general undertakings.

The Committee has established a central office in the Washington headquarters of the Council where information on all phases of cancer research will be assembled and from which reports may be distributed to interested investigators.

Many members of the Committee have participated intensively in the broad programs of research conducted under the pressure of war. It is both the hope and the sanguine expectation of the Committee that the fruitful pattern of cooperative investigations so successfully established during the war years, can now be carried on, modified and tempered to existing needs, into the continuing war against disease.

Membership of the Committee, as now constituted, includes the following:

DR. C. P. RHoads, Chairman
DR. FLORENCE R. SABIN, Secretary
DR. A. ROBERT DOESS
DR. A. BAIRD HASTINGS
DR. CHARLES B. HUGGINS
DR. DONALD F. JONES
DR. C. C. LITTLE
DR. CARL R. MOORE
DR. JOHN J. MORTON
DR. JAMES B. MURPHY
DR. EUGENE P. PENDERGRASS
DR. HOWARD C. TAYLOR, JR.
DR. M. A. TUVE
DR. M. C. WINTERNITZ
PHILIP S. OWEN, M.D.

For the Committee on Growth
Division of Medical Sciences
National Research Council
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington 25, D.C.
William Cramer

(1878–1945)

Whom the gods love die young. If this poignant phrase refers to years only it does not apply to William Cramer, for he was just over sixty-seven at the time of his death. But if it means that these favorites of the gods retain a youthful outlook until the end, nothing ever said of him was more true. His restless, inquiring mind ranged over the fields, to him always the Elysian fields, of biochemistry, physiology, and cancer research; the nervous system; metabolism, including that of the cancer cell; growth; the coagulation of blood; surface tension; the lipids; fever; infections; vitamins; hormones; cell structure; the parasitic etiology of cancer; diet; statistics; radiotherapy; resistance and susceptibility to cancer; the virus question; and carcinogenesis, the problem that filled so happily the evening of his life.

By reason of his early training in physiology and biochemistry and his subsequent position on the scientific staff of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, first directed by Bashford, later by Murray, and then by Gye, he was amply equipped to conduct almost any sort of investigation into malignant neoplastic disease. Add to these advantages an acute, perceptive mind and an admirable critical sense if an explanation be desired for his rapid rise to a commanding position among the oncologists of the world.

During the London period he was accounted one of Europe’s most competent biochemists, and the generosity with which he shared his great store of precise information with colleagues who were less fortunately endowed, or less well equipped, was often the subject of remark.

Cramer was born in Brandenburg, Prussia, on June 2, 1878, to Siegmund and Olga Cramer, nee Harff, and died suddenly of coronary occlusion while on vacation in Denver, Colorado, on August 10, 1945.

He received the degree of Ph.D. from the University of Berlin in 1900, and in the same year was appointed Research Chemist there. His D.Sc. was conferred in 1906 by the University of Edinburgh, and his M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. by University College, London, in 1917, two years after he had acquired British citizenship. From 1903 to 1905 he was a junior member of the staff of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, London, and a senior member from 1915 until his retirement in September 1939; the intervening years were spent as Lecturer on Chemical Physiology at the University of Edinburgh.

Cramer was at one time on the committee responsible for Acta of the International Union against Cancer, and a member of the Editorial Committee of The Cancer Review, a journal that had the courage to replace the customary tepid and colorless abstract with critical, and sometimes even mordant, ones. He was a delegate of the British Government at the international cancer conferences in Madrid, 1933; in Brussels, 1936; and in Atlantic City, 1939. In 1940 he was invited to deliver the Middleton Goldsmith Lecture of the New York Pathological Society.

He was the author of two books—one on practical chemical physiology and one on fever; of chapters in three books—on the physiology of reproduction, on cancer research, and on histological technic respectively; and author or co-author of well over a hundred monographs.

Soon after arriving in the United States, in 1939, he received an appointment as Research Associate at the Barnard Free Skin and Cancer Hospital, St. Louis, where he remained, actively and fruitfully engaged, until his death.

In person William Cramer was spare and of average height, with the slight stoop so often ascribed to the student, and the immediate impression that here was a scholar was reinforced by the concave lenses that his myopia demanded. As was to have been expected, his pastimes ran to the intellectual rather than to the athletic; to music, to literature, to the graphic arts, rather than to golf and tennis, though he was fond of riding—a reversion, perhaps, to the days of his youth, when he passed his year of military training in a cavalry regiment. A charming host in his own home, as the writer can testify, he preferred in his leisure hours to discuss the opera, the latest art exhibit, current events, and other topics of general interest rather than the minute details of his calling.

Though a member of a group whose energies are focussed on one single problem, he must have been a little skeptical of coordinated cancer research on the grand scale that is being proposed today. For on one occasion, when its advantages had been suggested in conversation, he replied in his quiet way: “Yes, but the groups of forty or fifty chemists that industry turns loose on a problem know what they are looking for.”

Besides a host of friends and admiring colleagues he leaves a widow, the former Belle Klauber, to whom he was married in 1906, and two sons: Ian William David, born in 1913, and Michael William Valentine, born in 1924.
It is frequently said of a man that his place cannot be filled. Often enough an agreeable fiction, this applies with special cogency to William Cramer, for his broad training and his natural ability together made him a unique figure in his chosen field.

The following bibliography was supplied in part by Dr. E. V. Cowdry:


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William H. Woglom
William Cramer (1878–1945)

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