

Cancer Research

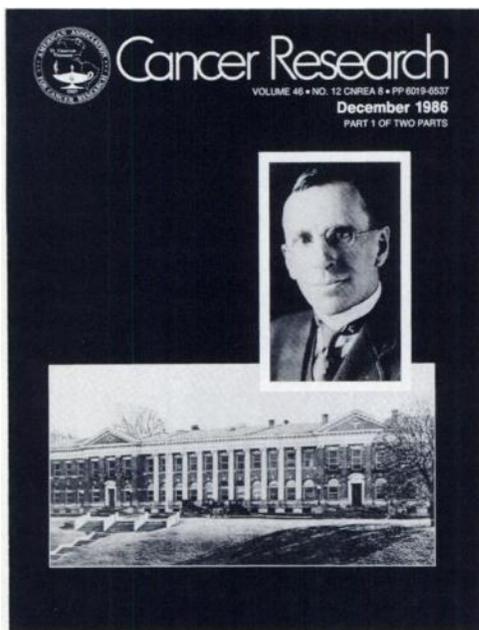
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PART 1 OF TWO PARTS



COVER LEGEND



The wide distribution of neoplastic diseases among animal species was well known by the end of the nineteenth century. The information was derived from individual specimens collected in museums of pathology, and from veterinary and abattoir sources of domestic animals. (cf A. Sticker, *Langenbecks Arch. Klin. Chir.*, 65: 616–696, 1902).

More systematic observations of tumors in feral animals were reported by George W. McCoy in 1909 and 1914. These were spin-offs from the antiplague measures that were undertaken on the Pacific Coast. McCoy in 1909 recorded that 99 tumors, of which 28 were diagnosed as being malignant, were encountered

among approximately 100,000 rats (of which 95% were *Rattus norvegicus*) examined in the antiplague work (*J. Med Res.*, 21: 285–296, 1909). In contrast, only 8 tumors, of which 4 were diagnosed as sarcomas, were found among 250,000 ground squirrels, *Spermophilus beecheyi*, then called *Citellus beecheyi* (*J. Infect. Dis.*, 14: 53–55 1914). The two reports can be designated as among the earliest contributions to epizootiology.

George Walter McCoy (1876–1952) was a leading American authority on infectious diseases, especially leprosy and plague. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he entered the United States Public Health Service in 1900. He was involved in plague control until 1914. From 1915 to 1937, he was the Director of the Hygienic Laboratory, which was re-named the National Institute of Health in 1930. A proposal to initiate cancer research at the Hygienic Laboratory appears in the 1910 Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service. The report probably was written by McCoy, but the proposal was not funded and lay in abeyance until 1922. Cancer research was then started at the Division of Pharmacology of the Hygienic Laboratory in Washington, DC, under Dr. Carl Voegtlin, and at Harvard University School of Medicine in Boston, under Dr. Joseph Schereschewsky. These two units were amalgamated to form the National Cancer Institute in 1937, at Bethesda, MD.

The portrait of McCoy and the photograph of the Hygienic Laboratory at 25th and E streets, N.W., Washington, DC are from the National Library of Medicine. The text of the 1910 proposal for cancer research at the Hygienic Laboratory is reproduced in the *J. Natl. Cancer Inst.*, 58: 457–459, 1977.

M. B. S.