Roswell Park Memorial Institute

Genesis of a Cancer Center

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The Roswell Park Memorial Institute is one of the oldest and one of the largest cancer research, treatment and educational facilities in the world. Organized in 1898, through the untiring efforts of Dr. Roswell Park, Professor of Surgery at the University of Buffalo School of Medicine, and Mr. Edward H. Butler, Sr., publisher of the Buffalo Evening News, the Institute has been a leader in the cancer field since its beginning.

Dr. Park, deeply concerned about the lack of any organized effort in the United States to investigate the nature of cancer and the ways that its treatment could be improved, sought the help of Mr. Butler. Dr. Park's scientific expertise and foresight combined with Mr. Butler's political influence resulted in obtaining New York State Governor Frank S. Black's signature on a bill allocating funds on April 29, 1898, for the establishment of a cancer laboratory, known as the New York State Pathological Laboratory. The three small rooms comprising the laboratory in the University of Buffalo School of Medicine, marked the beginning of what today is Roswell Park Memorial Institute, a 20-building complex covering eight city blocks in downtown Buffalo, plus satellite laboratories in three suburban communities.

The initial grant helped to equip and maintain the laboratory where, for the first time, investigators could study the causes, nature, mortality rate, and treatment of cancer. Directly related to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients from the outset, the laboratory represented the first instance in history in which any government concerned itself directly in cancer research and sponsored a group attack on cancer.

Many great names of American medicine heralded the establishment of the cancer laboratory, including Dr. William Osier and Dr. William H. Welch of the newly established Johns Hopkins Medical School in

Baltimore, M.D., who visited the cancer laboratory often in its early days. Madame Curie, twice winner of the Nobel Prize, and her daughter spent time at Roswell Park in 1921, and brought to this country a major supply of radium that was immediately used in cancer treatment.

The New York State Pathological Laboratory of the University of Buffalo later evolved into the New York State Institute for the Study of Malignant Diseases, and in 1948 was renamed Roswell Park Memorial Institute.

Roswell Park's international reputation has its roots in the early progress made by Dr. Park and his illustrious staff. Successive directors have contributed to the overall development of the institute. Dr. Harvey Gaylord, the second director (1904–1923), reported the first observations implicating immunological reactions with malignancy in 1904; and while on the institute's staff, Dr. George Clowes initiated the first cancer chemotherapy program in the United States. Drs. Carl and Gerty Cori were recruited by Dr. Gaylord and worked at the institute for several years

doing early work on a project which was the basis for them receiving the Nobel Prize in later years. Dr. Burton T. Simpson, the institute's third director (1923–1943), was the chief pathologist of the institute's statewide pathological service that was housed at the institute. As Director, he emphasized the clinical activities of the institute. Dr. William H. Wehr, acting director 1943 to 1945, was responsible for rotating medical students into oncology training at the institute in the early 1940s. Dr. Louis Kress, the fourth director (1945–1952), had been director of the statewide Cancer Control Division and as institute director expanded basic and clinical research programs and began an intensive educational program for medical students, residents, and physicians.

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Fig. 1. The Roswell Park Memorial Institute.

Dr. George Moore became the fifth director in 1952 with the charge from the New York State Health Department of increasing the cancer research programs and to make the institute a primary research facility, augmenting its hospital and outpatient clinics. This period was also marked by major expansion of the institute's facilities.

Dr. James T. Grace, Jr., the sixth director (1967 to 1970), continued to lead the institute in a positive direction while studying the role of viruses in tumor formation.

Dr. Gerald P. Murphy became the seventh institute director in 1970. Since this time the institute has continued to grow remarkably in physical size and increased emphasis has been placed on developing new programs in basic science, clinical research, education and cancer control.

Results of these programs have been outstanding. Research at Roswell Park Memorial Institute has resulted in newer more effective chemotherapeutic agents being used in the treatment of cancer patients; recognition and management of immune factors in cancer; development of antiviral agents for testing in cancer patients, and a host of innovative approaches which have improved the 'quality of life' in cancer patients through rehabilitation services which have aided in restoring cancer patients to a normal useful life.

Explanation of basic, clinical, educational and cancer control programs at this time occurred concurrently with the physical expansion in the 1970s: the Grace Cancer Drug Center in 1971, the Kevin Guest House Complex in 1972, the Cancer Cell Center in 1972, a protected parking ramp in 1974, the acquisition of a 210-bed nursing home for ongoing clinical activities in 1974, the establishment of the Cancer Patient Rehabilitation Center in 1974, an Ambulatory Services Building for a modernized outpatient department in 1975, and the acquisition of Butler Hall by volunteer affiliates of the Roswell Park Memorial Institute (RPMI) in 1976. In 1978, the institute opened the nation's first Adolescent Cancer Patient Unit; and a DNA recombinant unit is under construction in 1979.

Roswell Park Memorial Institute has not stopped here. Program modification continues to mold Roswell Park into a model comprehensive cancer center (one of the original three so designated by the National Cancer Institute in 1971), securing the best staff and equipment, and initiating important new programs such as the National Prostatic Cancer Project as well as several cancer control and rehabilitation programs. The Cancer Control Program has involved the institute with many community hospitals throughout the state of New York. The institute has been adjudged one of the two best comprehensive cancer centers in the United

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States in a peer review by the National Cancer Advisory Board.

Roswell Park Memorial Institute's work has not been confined to Buffalo, New York State, or the United States. As a primary member of the International Union Against Cancer (UICC), the institute has participated in establishing international programs for cancer. The UICC is a worldwide association with member organizations in 75 countries, including the People's Republic of China. Dr. Murphy is now serving his second term as the Secretary-General.

New York State is extremely proud of Roswell Park Memorial Institute. Its basic and clinical research

programs, patient care facilities, and education activities are marshalled on all levels to combat cancer. The cancer job is enormous, but because of the foresight of Dr. Roswell Park in laying the ground work for a cancer institute, Roswell Park today with its many dedicated employees makes significant contributions to meet the challenge which hopefully someday will result in the defeat of mankind's cruellest disease.