

# UT Southwestern Medical Center

## In Memoriam: Dr. Jean Wilson

June 14, 2021

To the UT Southwestern community:

I am saddened to share news of the passing of our esteemed colleague Jean Wilson, M.D., Professor Emeritus of Internal Medicine, whose scientific discoveries led to profound insights into the mechanisms underlying sexual differentiation and to now widely used treatments for prostate disease.

His death represents a great loss for the entire UT Southwestern community, and we offer our sincerest condolences to Dr. Wilson's family.

Dr. Wilson was an internationally recognized endocrinologist whose laboratory research over six decades at UT Southwestern was largely responsible for current understanding of the mechanisms by which steroid hormones induce male sexual differentiation and was instrumental in identifying the scientific underpinnings of a widely prescribed class of drugs known as 5-alpha-reductase inhibitors – which include finasteride (Proscar, Propecia) and dutasteride (Avodart) – to treat enlarged prostate and balding in men.

His discovery of 5-alpha-reductase and the identification of dihydrotestosterone as the primary hormone associated with the growth of the prostate was transformative in our understanding of and treatment for prostate disease, leading to the first medical therapy for benign prostatic hyperplasia.

He also created the groundwork for understanding differentiation of male and female genital development. His investigations into testosterone formation, metabolism, and action in embryonic and postnatal animals as well as in subjects with single gene defects that impair crucial steps in the process, earned him international prominence.

Dr. Wilson edited two landmark medical textbooks – *Williams Textbook of Endocrinology* and *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine* – and served as editor for *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*, among others.

In recognition of his accomplishments, Dr. Wilson was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1982), the National Academy of Sciences in (1983), and the National Academy of Medicine (1994), as well as the American Philosophical Society. He served as President of the Endocrine Society, the American Society for Clinical Investigation, and the Association of American Physicians, and received numerous recognitions including the Kober Medal from the Association of American Physicians (1999); the Fred Conrad Koch Award from The Endocrine Society (1993); Gregory Pincus Award from the

Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology (1992); Henry Dale Medal from the Society for Endocrinology (1991); Amory Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1977), and the Eugene Fuller Award from the American Urological Association.

At UT Southwestern, he served as the first director of the Medical Scientist Training Program, and it was recently announced that the Physician Scientist Training Program in Internal Medicine would be known as the Jean Wilson Society. The Jean D. Wilson Center for Biomedical Research and Jean D. Wilson, M.D. Distinguished Alumnus Lecture are named in his honor. The center was established with support from Dr. Wilson and his sister, the late Dr. Margaret Sitton, to promote research in endocrinology, developmental biology, and genetics, along with the J.D. and Maggie E. Wilson Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Research. He was also instrumental in establishing the Class of 1955 student scholarships, along with the late Dr. Daniel Foster, a former Chair of Internal Medicine.

He obtained an undergraduate degree in chemistry from UT Austin, graduated from UT Southwestern Medical School in 1955, and served as a researcher at the National Institutes of Health for two years. He held the Charles Cameron Sprague Distinguished Chair of Biomedical Research until his retirement in 2011, when he was named Professor Emeritus in Internal Medicine after more than 50 years with our institution.

Dr. Wilson's exemplary scientific standard, which he balanced with a sense of humility and humor, will be greatly missed, yet the invaluable foundation of knowledge and understanding he helped establish will further explorations in the field for generations.

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