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## In Memoriam: Dr. John C. Porter: Professor Emeritus and pioneer in neuroendocrinology

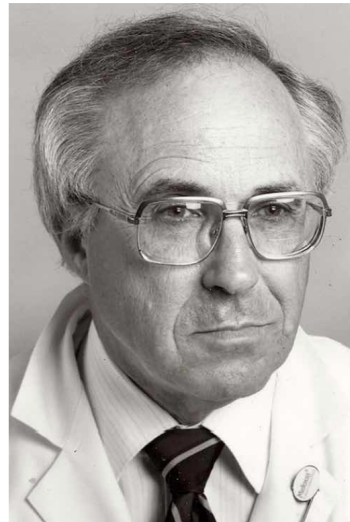
SEPTEMBER 24, 2018 • BY: [PATRICK WASCOVICH](#)

Dr. John C. Porter, an early pioneer in neuroendocrinology and UT Southwestern's first Scientific Director of the Cecil H. and Ida Green Center for Reproductive Biology Sciences, died on July 8. He was 93.

A Professor Emeritus of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dr. Porter was known for his studies about how the hypothalamus interacts with the pituitary gland. He succeeded at measuring peptide hormones in the brain using a revolutionary device he invented that averted the mixing of peptides during long collection periods. Using this device, he and Dr. Roger Guillemin of the Salk Institute later collaborated on a study that ultimately led to Dr. Guillemin's receipt of the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1977.

"He was known for his studies demonstrating chemical communication between the brain and the anterior pituitary gland," said Dr. Barry Schwarz, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology. "During my Ob/Gyn residency at Parkland Hospital, the late Dr. Paul MacDonald [third Chairman of Ob/Gyn] called all of the residents together and explained Dr. Porter's work to us. He told us that this was some of the most exciting work in human endocrinology of the century and how it explained many conditions that were known to exist but had never been explained."

Dr. Porter was gifted as a scientist, colleague, and educator, Dr. Schwarz recalled.



Dr. John C. Porter

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“He had a scientific presence and could see things in data that no one else saw,” Dr. Schwarz said. “He was exceptionally well-read and could reason from clinical observations (made by physicians) to the basic science that might explain the observations. He also was a wonderful mentor, and as a teacher, Dr. Porter was a natural.”

Dr. Porter joined UTSW in 1953 as Instructor of Physiology and was promoted to Professor in 1964. In 1972, following establishment of the precursor to the Green Center for Reproductive Biology Sciences, Dr. Porter became the Center’s Scientific Director. That same year, he received a joint faculty appointment in Obstetrics and Gynecology and moved his laboratories to that Department in 1973.

Semiretired by 1995, Dr. Porter continued to work part time as an adjunct faculty member, consulting and mentoring faculty and fellows. Upon his full retirement in 2003, Dr. Porter was named Professor Emeritus of Obstetrics and Gynecology – the first Department faculty member with a Ph.D. to achieve that status.

“Dr. Porter’s reputation as an authority in neuroendocrinology attracted young research fellows from as far away as Chile, Yugoslavia, and Japan,” said Dr. Steven Bloom, Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Over his 50-year career, Dr. Porter trained 35 research fellows from 16 countries along with numerous medical students, laboratory technicians, and staff members. Twice, Dr. Porter’s lectures to freshman medical students brought him Distinguished Teaching Award recognition.

Born in Paducah, Texas, Dr. Porter graduated from Baylor University in 1949 following military service in World War II. He received his Master of Arts degree from Texas Technological College – now known as Texas Tech University – and then earned a doctorate from Iowa State University. Dr. Porter spent a year conducting postdoctoral research in endocrinology at Duke University School of Medicine before returning to Texas and joining UTSW.

His honors and awards included the Purdue Frederick Award for Medical Research from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 1978; appointment as first holder of the Arthur Grollman Professorship in Neuroendocrinology in 1981; receipt of a National Institutes of Health MERIT grant in 1989 to research the pituitary gland’s role in controlling dopamine neurons in the aging brain; and a Doctor Honoris Causa Award from the University of Aix-Marseille in France in 1990.



*Dr. Bloom, Associate Dean of Clinical Sciences at UT Southwestern Medical School, holds the Jack A. Pritchard, M.D. Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology.*

*Dr. Schwarz holds the Arthur Grollman Professorship in Obstetrics and Gynecology.*

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