

Doctor Harry L. Messmore, Jr. (Class 24-42)

Dr. Messmore was an admirable man of exceptional qualities and talents. He had a long and illustrious career as an educator, researcher, and clinician specializing in both benign and malignant hematologic disorders. He had great vision and was ahead of his time. Several of the current practices in hematology–coagulation were initially perceived and/or developed by Dr. Messmore before their recognition and routine use by others.

Dr. Messmore began his career at Edward Hines VA Hospital in 1964 and joined Loyola University's Stritch School of Medicine in 1968. He was one of the first to become board certified in both hematology and oncology. He became Chief of Hematology at Loyola in 1971.

In the early 1970s, Dr. Messmore met and recruited Jawed Fareed, at the time a graduate student in the Department of Pharmacology and a medical technologist/chemist in the clinical laboratory at Loyola. Together, they developed a specialized clinical laboratory for the diagnosis of difficult blood disorders and to carry out translational research. The Special Hematology Laboratory became the focus of research (with clinical applications) on heparin, clotting factors predisposing to thrombosis, and acquired and hereditary circulating anticoagulants. Through the years, Dr. Messmore's research also focused on drugs to treat hemophilia and new anticoagulants such as the low molecular weight heparins, synthetic heparin, new oral anticoagulants, and antiplatelet drugs. He recognized the clinical importance of heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT) nearly 50 years ago, long before other physicians came to the understanding of the pathogenesis of this catastrophic syndrome. He sounded the alarm, and many lives have since been saved.

Being a laboratorian at heart, applications to the clinical laboratory and development of new assays for the detection of bleeding and clotting disorders and monitoring new anticoagulant drugs were an important aspect of many projects for Dr. Messmore. He developed diagnostic programs for difficult diseases such as HIT and warfarin-induced necrosis and for the identification of factor VIII antibodies, lupusanti coagulant, cancer-associated thrombosis, and consumptive coagulopathies.

Despite its modest beginnings, the Special Hematology Laboratory at the Loyola University Medical Center was later transformed into the Hemostasis & Thrombosis Research Laboratory, which is now internationally recognized for its research and clinical management of bleeding and clotting disorders. This reputation is because of the teachings and dedicated efforts of Dr. Harry Messmore. However, these developments were also due in part to the continual input of several talented young individuals identified by Dr. Messmore.

For 35 years, Dr. Messmore led a group of clinicians, scientists, and students at all fronts of hematology. He had a probing mind, always full of ideas, an encyclopedic memory, and he was receptive to the use of new technologies. He was a constant educator, daily challenging those who worked with him. He provided many an

opportunity to work with him and learn the scientific approach to medicine, which is now defined as “from bench to bedside.”

Dr. Messmore fostered much national and international collaboration, which spanned from Europe to Japan, encompassing the entire globe. He developed international collaborations with experts who often sought his expertise in difficult areas of the medical sciences.

He was truly a physician’s physician, a scientist’s scientist, a teacher’s teacher. Those of us who were privileged to work with him on a daily basis say that he was unquestionably the best teacher we ever had. He was always willing to help us and guide us to carry out our professional responsibilities in the most exceptional manner. Those who he trained in both clinical and scientific areas have all attained a stature in their area of expertise that would not have been possible without his training.

Dr. Messmore became Professor Emeritus in July 1992 at Loyola but continued his activities at the Hines VA Hospital. His illustrious career was recognized by his receiving Loyola’s highest honor, the Stritch Medal, in 1994. Even though he unfortunately lost his vision due to macular degeneration and glaucoma in his last years, Dr. Messmore continued consulting, publishing, teaching, and advising students, faculty, and other peers at Loyola and Hines. Throughout his life, his quest for knowledge in both clinical and basic sciences remained strong. A true lifelong learner, he continued to actively participate in the weekly Hematology–Oncology grand rounds until his last days imparting his wisdom and challenging the speakers.

On a personal level, Dr. Messmore was the most caring individual who was always accessible. He was personally modest but always interesting. It was easy to discuss fishing, history, human nature, or his own personal history with him, such as his early work with the Amish community in Central Illinois where his medical services were often paid for with a side of beef or homegrown vegetables. Dr. Messmore was a decorated war veteran and often spoke of his personal accounts of World War II; General Patton’s army, to which he belonged; and his participation in the Battle of Northern France, the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Rhineland, and the Battle of Central Europe. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his leadership in the battle of St. Nazaire River in France. In 2010, the French government named him a chevalier (knight) of the *Ordre national de la Légion d’honneur* in recognition of his valor.

The legacy of Dr. Messmore is in the people he taught, the establishment of an internationally recognized reference center at Loyola for bleeding and clotting disorders, and in the lifesaving drugs he helped to develop. We have all been blessed to have had Dr. Messmore in our lives, for every day with him was a new learning experience. His teachings, wisdom, values, and generosity are what will continue to guide us.

In Memoriam Harry L. Messmore, Jr., MD (1922–2011) Jeanine M. Walenga, PhD, Jawed Fareed, PhD Departments of Thoracic & Cardiovascular Surgery and Pathology, Stritch School of Medicine, Loyola University Chicago, Maywood, Illinois (2012).

Doctor's Discovery Saved Thousands of Lives

By Maureen O'Donnell, Dec 9, 2011

Harry L. Messmore saved countless lives during and after World War II.

In December of 1944, the second lieutenant and his men dragged 2-ton anti-tank cannons up a French hill – foot-by-foot and whisper-by-whisper – for four hours, under cover of darkness, stabilizing the big guns with blocks under their wheels until they were close enough to heavily armed German bunkers to fire into the slits of their openings.

When dawn broke, the Yanks fired the cannons at the bunkers to cover an attack by a swarm of American infantry. Fifty-four Germans inside the pillboxes were captured.

The operation helped rob the Germans of their protective artillery for a U-boat “pen” near St. Nazaire, enabling American warships to plow up the River Loire and take out the submarines.

After World War II, he became a board-certified hematologist/oncologist at Loyola University Health System. Again, he saved countless lives. Dr. Messmore’s concern about an unusual adverse reaction to an anti-clotting drug helped lead to the development of safer medications, according to Dr. Jawed Fareed, a fellow expert on blood-thinners and director of Loyola’s Hemostasis and Thrombosis Research Program.

For Dr. Messmore’s war bravery, the nation of France last year named him a chevalier (knight) of the Legion of Honor. Pierre Vimont, French ambassador to the United States, wrote to Dr. Messmore to thank him, saying: “The French people will never forget your courage and your devotion to the great cause of freedom.”

Dr. Messmore described the wartime hoisting of the cannons in typically modest fashion in a 2003 Veterans History Project interview by Martin Thomas.

“It was kind of uphill, so it was a pretty big job,” he said. “But we got them up there.”

Despite losing his sight to macular degeneration and glaucoma – and surviving three heart surgeries – Dr. Messmore continued to do medical research by having the latest scholarly papers read to him by relatives and former medical students.

His choice of profession was influenced by his post-war journey home on a troop ship. To pass the time, he read a book from the ship library about the founders of the Mayo Clinic. The vessel was carrying doctors from a military hospital, and one physician told Dr. Messmore not to go into medicine because “everything that can be discovered in medicine has already been discovered,” he told the Veterans History Project. But the book inspired him.

He graduated in 1952 from medical school at the University of Illinois at Chicago and began practicing in an Amish community in Arthur, Ill. “That’s where he developed an unbelievable bedside manner,” said his son, Gary. “He made his calls in the middle of the night; delivered over 1,000 babies in the middle of the night.”

Often, his Amish patients would pay him with a side of beef or homegrown vegetables.

He began work in 1964 at Hines VA Hospital and joined Loyola University's Stritch School of Medicine in 1968. He was the first chief of hematology at Loyola and worked on the faculty for 30 years.

His recognition of abnormal clotting in some patients treated with anticoagulants led to new and safer generations of blood-thinners, said Fareed.

"He diagnosed Heparin-induced thrombocytopenia [HIT syndrome] before people even started to talk about it, 40 years ago, because he saw patients dying of stroke and deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism," Fareed said. "He sounded the alarm."

"Many lives have been saved" as a result, Fareed said, "perhaps hundreds of thousands of lives" around the world.

Dr. Messmore published more than 150 scientific articles. He retired in 1998 but continued doing research. On Friday, Fareed said Dr. Messmore asked him: "Did you read this paper in the New England Journal of Medicine?"

Dr. Harry L. Messmore Jr (Class 24-42) Military History

Military Service - March 5, 1941 - February 6, 1946

March 5, 1941 - August 4, 1942
33rd Infantry Division Artillery
633rd Tank Destroyer Battalion
Corporal Sargeant (S-2 section, Hg Company)
OCS Class 24 Fort Sill

August 4, 1942 - November 25, 1945

94th Infantry Division Artillery
356th FABn (105mm)
Battery A - executive officer 1943-45
first lieutenant 1944
Battery A - Commander July 1945-November 1945
Captain - August 1945

Served with the 94th Division in the European theater.
4 battle stars. Bronze Star Medal, France, Ardennes,
Rhine, Central Europe.