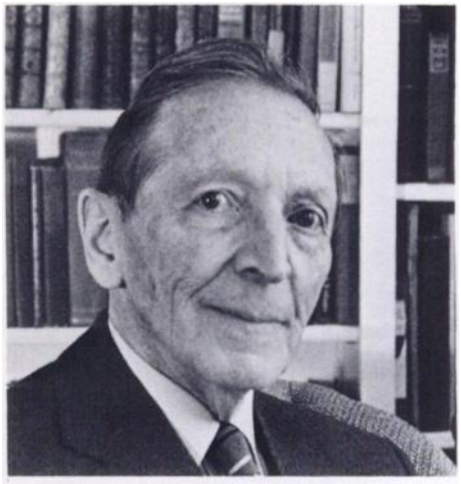
IN MEMORIAM

Herrman L. Blumgart



Herrman L. Blumgart, first physician pioneer and honorary Fellow of the Society of Nuclear Medicine, died March 21, 1977, in his eighty-second year. Although he entered Harvard Medical School with intentions of pursuing psychiatry, he arranged to work with Cecil Drinker and Francis Peabody to study the effect of pulmonary congestion on lung function. While still an intern at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, he published an original work on the absorptions of pitressin from the nasal mucous membrane. This study culminated in the successful treatment of several patients with diabetes insipidus.

As a Moseley Travelling Fellow, he spent a year with Sir Thomas Lewis and Sir Henry Dale in London. With Lewis he studied the relationship of digitalis dosage on the cardiac rate response to exercise in patients with atrial fibrillation and demonstrated for the first time the necessity of full digitalizing doses to block the exercise inhibition of vagus nerve action on the heart. Though the results of his experimental work in Dale's laboratory were disappointing, the experience was rewarding because he "observed how eminent scholars designed their investigations."

On his return from London he joined the Harvard Medical Service and the Thorndike Memorial Laboratory at the Boston City Hospital. Dr. Blumgart repeated Koch's 1922 study using fluorescein to measure circulation time and found it unsatisfactory. He subsequently developed a small ionization chamber (with Yens) and an end window geiger chamber (Hewlett) 4 yrs before the Geiger-Mueller tube was invented. He used a natural radioactive material (Radium C) 10 yrs before radionuclides were produced artificially, and his first clinical study involving a radioactive indicator was published in 1927 (described by Marshall Brucer in his nuclear pioneer lecture honoring Dr. Blumgart in 1969). The investigations carried out during the next 5 years were published in a series of 20 papers that culminated in 1931 with a monograph in *Medicine* titled, "The Velocity of Blood Flow in Health and Disease." As part of his research Dr. Blumgart extensively investigated the effect of hypothyroidism on the heart and the characteristics of coronary artery disease that led to the demonstration of the coronary intra-arterial collateral circulation in response to coronary narrowing.

In 1928 Dr. Blumgart was appointed an Assistant Professor of Medicine and Director of Medical Research at the Beth Israel Hospital and Head of the Harvard Teaching Service of Medicine. He remained at the Beth Israel Hospital until retirement in 1962. In 1946 he became Physician-in Chief, succeeding Dr. Harry Linenthal, and Professor of Medicine. About 300 physicians, including many from foreign countries, obtained their training in medicine or in medical research under Dr. Blumgart, and about 150 professorships in medical schools and universities have been or are held by physicians who received part or all of their training under his direction. In 1958 he was a visiting professor at King George Medical School of Lucknow, University, Lucknow, India, and while there established the first teaching medical service at the medical school.

He was Editor-in-Chief of *Circulation* for 10 yrs and served on the editorial committees of several other publications, including the *New England Journal of Medicine.* He was a Master of the American College of Physicians and one of the Founders Group of the American Board of Internal Medicine and Cardiology. He was a member of the Association of American Physicians, the American Society of Clinical Investigation, the Interurban Clinical Club, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Physiological Society. Dr. Blumgart was active in the Heart Association movement and served as president of the Massachusetts Heart Association and the New England Cardiovascular Society. He was awarded the Gold Heart by the American heart Association and was the first recipient of their James D. Herrick Award.

Upon his retirement in 1962, the Herrman Ludwig Blumgart Professorship of Medicine was established at Harvard Medical School, and an honorary Doctor of Science degree was awarded Dr. Blumgart by Harvard University. The Society of Nuclear Medicine named his as their first physician pioneer in nuclear medicine in 1969.

Dr. Blumgart is survived by his wife, Margaret, a daughter, Ann Gurewich, and two grandchildren.

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