

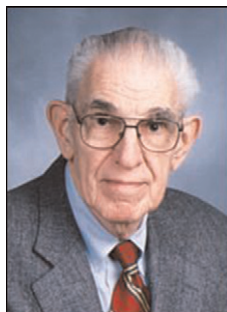
David V. Becker, MD

David V. Becker, MD, a seminal figure in the last half century of nuclear medicine and clinical thyroidology, died on January 31 after a lengthy illness. Dr. Becker was a pioneer in the use of radioactive isotopes in the diagnosis and treatment of thyroid disease.

After completing a fellowship at Memorial Hospital in New York (NY) with Rulon Rawson, MD, he entered the U.S. Army in 1952 and established the Army's second radioisotope laboratory, at Brooke Army Hospital at Fort Sam Houston (San Antonio, TX). After honorable discharge from the service, Dr. Becker returned to New York in 1954 for a medical residency at the New York Hospital. During his residency, he was recruited by the chief of medicine, David Barr, MD, to set up the first radioisotope laboratory at that institution. When the laboratory opened in 1955, only patients with thyroid disease were studied and treated. Under Dr. Becker's direction, the number and variety of organ systems and diseases studied with radionuclides expanded. The laboratory was eventually incorporated into the Department of Radiology as the Division of Nuclear Medicine. He remained director of the division until 1995. Dr. Becker's major clinical interests were the treatment of hyperthyroidism and thyroid cancer with radioactive iodine and the effect of radioactive fallout on the thyroid. He was outspoken in his support of potassium iodide (KI) distribution to populations residing near nuclear power plants for thyroid blocking of potential environmental releases of radioiodine and served on a National Academy of Sciences panel that recommended distributing KI.

Dr. Becker served as a professor of medicine and radiology at Cornell University Medical School. He was also keenly interested in the history of medicine, especially the early days of radioiodine treatment. He personally knew and interviewed many of the pioneers in the field and published a monograph on the subject. He also published numerous original papers and book chapters on thyroid disease and delivered numerous invited lectures. He maintained an active clinical practice in thyroid disease and routinely received citations as one of the best doctors in New York.

Dr. Becker was an original investigator in the Thyrotoxicosis Follow-up Study and was chair of the



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Thyrotoxicosis Follow-up Study Group at the National Cancer Institute (NCI). He was a consultant to the NCI, where he served on many committees and was involved in studies on the effects of radioactive fallout on the thyroid gland. He participated in investigations of Marshall Islanders and of the increase in childhood thyroid cancer following the Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident. He was among the leaders of the Chernobyl follow-up study and devel-

opment of health care monitoring policies for survivors of the accident, receiving a White House Citation for Humanitarian Efforts as a result. Dr. Becker served on several scientific committees of the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements. He was an active member of many professional organizations, most prominently the American Thyroid Association (ATA). He served as president of the ATA in 1982 and 1983 and received its Distinguished Service Medal in 1989. He also received the Berson-Yalow Award from SNM.

Dr. Becker was born May 24, 1923, in New York (NY), the only child of Albert and Miriam Becker. He was a graduate of Columbia University and the New York University School of Medicine. He had a wonderful sense of humor and many interests beyond science and medicine. He was an accomplished potter and studied for 20 summers at the Haystack Mountain School of Craft in Maine. He also loved gardening, travel, and his hometown of New York City and (as was well known to his staff) had a special affinity for chocolate and "New York" cheesecake. He is survived by his wife, Lois Lunin; his son, Daniel Becker, and daughter-in-law, Martha Toll, and their daughters, Lila and Naomi Becker; and his daughter, Susan Becker, and her partner, Faith Baum, and their daughters, Zoe and Jamie Becker. Dr. Becker's first wife, Naomi Isaacson Becker, a sculptor, died in 1974.

Dr. Becker trained legions of physicians, scientists, and technologists, and his impact on the field of nuclear medicine will certainly endure. He was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word, endearing himself to all who knew him. He will be sadly missed.

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