

James Clarke White

The career of Dr. James Clarke White was marked by a long productive period during which he devoted himself to the development of surgery of the nervous system. An early concern with the specific problems associated with intractable pain led to extensive careful exploration of measures for its relief. His continuing contributions in this field, amply emphasized by his presentations in this volume, are widely known and adopted.

Born in Austria on February 6, 1895, while his father was studying medicine in Vienna, Dr. White became a member of a family with a tradition of medicine as a career. Both his grandfather and father were professors at Harvard Medical School and chiefs of the Dermatology Department at the Massachusetts General Hospital. After graduation from Groton, Dr. White entered Harvard College and received his A.B. degree in chemistry cum laude in 1917. Following 2 years of Navy service as a watch and division officer on a light cruiser, he returned to Harvard and in 1923 was awarded his M.D. degree magna cum laude. The year 1923-1924 was spent as an intern in pathology at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. While maintaining a great interest in Dr. Harvey Cushing's work in neurosurgery, Dr. White went into general surgery and spent the years 1924-1927 at the Massachusetts General Hospital as intern and resident in general surgery. In 1927, he received a Moseley Travelling Fellowship from Harvard Medical School which enabled him to spend 6 months working on problems of the sympathetic nervous system and pain surgery with Professor A. Hovelacque in Paris and Professor René Leriche in Strasbourg.

On returning to Boston in 1928, Dr. White joined the Massachusetts General Hospital staff in general surgery, working particularly in the surgery of vascular disease and pain in cardiovascular disease. In 1935, he became a member of the neurosurgical staff and in 1941 was appointed its chief. At this time, however, he again entered the Navy, serving for 5 years in the Medical Corps as chief of neurosurgery at the United States Naval Hospitals in Chelsea, Massachusetts, and St. Albans, New York. His work at these hospitals was especially concerned with injury to the spinal cord and peripheral nerves. After discharge from active duty with the rank of captain, Dr. White returned to full-time duty at the Massachusetts General Hospital. In addition, he served the Veterans Administration for 10 years as branch section chief of neurosurgery for the New England area. During this time, he helped to supervise the organization of Veterans Administration neurosurgical facilities. Dr. White remained in the Naval Reserve until 1953 when he retired. He maintained continuing interests in riding and shooting, as well as a lifelong love for the sea.

In addition to his work as chief of neurosurgery at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. White had a long teaching and research career. Beginning as alumni assistant in surgery at Harvard in 1926, he taught for an uninterrupted period of 35 years. In 1955, he was named professor of surgery of the Harvard Medical School at the Massachusetts General Hospital. As one of the outstanding teachers on the Harvard faculty, Dr. White's early and long interest in the tutorial program has been an effective stimulus in the physiological approach to surgery for many of the Medical School's students. In the training of pre- and postdoctoral fellows, he established and maintained a high standard of academic surgery.

Dr. White's investigative interests in neurosurgery were connected primarily with neurovisceral physiology and the mechanisms and relief of chronic painful conditions. These resulted in over 160 publications, including two textbooks: *The Autonomic Nervous System*, three editions, the third with Dr. R. H. Smithwick and Dr. F. A. Simeone; and *Pain: Its Mechanisms and Neurosurgical Control*, with Dr. W. H. Sweet. At the Massachusetts General Hospital, he helped to develop laboratories and fostered investigation in many diverse areas of neurosurgical research.

In 1961, Dr. White retired as chief of neurosurgery at the Massachusetts General Hospital and professor of surgery at Harvard Medical School, but he continued medical writing and maintained a private practice. His own meticulous patient records were illustrated by detailed drawings of each operative procedure. In October 1962, he gave a series of lectures at a number of Japanese universities, and in the spring of 1963 participated in the Middle East Medical Assembly, presenting the Wilder Penfield Lecture at the American University of Beirut.

Throughout his long career, Dr. White actively participated in professional societies and organizations. He was vice chairman of the American Board of Neurological Surgery, president of the Boston Society of Psychiatry and Neurology, vice president of the American Neurological Association, and a member of the National Institutes of Health Study Section on Neurology. He was also a member of the American Surgical Association, the American Medical Association, the Harvey Cushing Society, the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease, the American College of Surgeons, the Society of Neurological Surgeons, the Boston Surgical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Internationally, Dr. White was a member of the Académie de Chirurgie (Paris), the Société de Chirurgie de Lyon, the International Society of Surgery, and an honorary member of the Société de Neurochirurgie de Langue Française. Dr. James White died in January 1981.

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