

Obituary

Dr. R. R. Race (1907–1984)

Patricia Tippett

MRC Blood Group Unit, Wolfson House, University College London, 4. Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HE, Great Britain

Robert Russell Race CBE, FRS died on 15 April at the age of 76. His pioneering work of outstanding quality on blood group genetics and serology earned him an international reputation.

Born on 28 November 1907 in Yorkshire, he was educated at St. Paul's School, London, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London and Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

While Assistant Director, and then Director of the Galton Laboratory Serum Unit, then in Cambridge, he unravelled the complexities of the recently discovered Rh blood groups. With his mentor, the late Sir Ronald Fisher, he proposed an alternative controversial genetic background for Rh, which slowly gained acceptance and is still in use today.

In 1946 he was appointed, by the Medical Research Council, the first Director of the Blood Group Unit, then in the Lister Institute. He and his colleagues continued to make fundamental contributions to all blood group systems, especially in their genetic application. Some subjects will always be associated with his name, Rh, Chimeras and, finally, Xg which brought blood groups into the lives of cytogeneticists and many more clinicians.

Since its first edition in 1950 'Blood Groups in Man', written with his wife Ruth Sanger FRS, has been a standard reference book for all interested in the subject. The content and characteristic style, lucid and often light hearted, were enjoyed by countless students in many countries who realised that serious science could also be fun.

Dr Race received many honours and prizes at home and overseas. These included Fellow of the Royal Society 1952, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians 1959, CBE 1970, Fellow of Royal College of Pathologists 1972, Mitglied, Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina 1973, Honorary doctorates of the Universities of



Paris 1965, and of Turku 1970, Karl Lansteiner Memorial Award, American Association of Blood Banks, jointly with Dr Ruth Sanger, 1957, Kruis van Verdienste, Royal Netherlands Red Cross, 1959, Oehlecker Medal, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Bluttransfusion, 1970, Philip Levine Award, American Society of Clinical Pathologists jointly with Dr Ruth Sanger, 1970, Gairdner Foundation Award, Canada, jointly with Dr Ruth Sanger, 1972.

He was an honorary member of many Societies.

Dr Race will be remembered in many countries, not only as a scientist of the highest calibre, but as a true gentleman blessed with modesty, wit and generosity.

His first wife, Monica Rotten, died in 1955; he is survived by his second wife Ruth and three daughters.