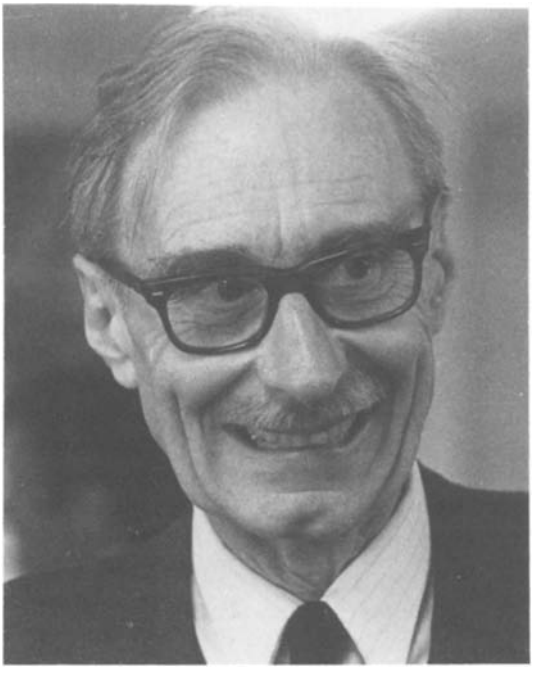
Immunogenetics 23: 141, 1986

Immunogenetics

In Memoriam



Jacques Oudin
1908–1985
(Photographed by
Jacques Roland in 1980)

Jacques Oudin, born in Dreux, France in 1908, died in Paris on October 15, 1985. With his death, we lose one of the founders of modern immunology.

Following his medical studies, Jacques Oudin completed his medical training at the Pasteur Hospital in 1935. In 1936, he received his M. D. degree and in 1937 he joined the Pasteur Institute and began work in the laboratory directed by Michel Weinberg. It was at the Pasteur Institute that Jacques Oudin was to spend his entire scientific career.

His work was interrupted by a period of service in the Army Medical Corps during the Second World War. Upon his return from captivity in 1941, he joined the Department of Microbial Chemistry. His work during this period led to the development of a method of determining the number of antigens in a sample by specific precipitation in gel medium. This method, of which numerous variants were described, formed the basis of a rebirth in immunology.

It was the use of this method that permitted him to describe the genetic polymorphism of immunoglobulins and to introduce the concept of allotypy. From the beginning, Jacques Oudin understood the importance of this discovery, both in terms of its genetic significance and its molecular implications. His elegant demonstration of the independent *a* and *b* loci in the rabbit suggested that immunoglobulins were comprised of more than one chain. It was also in his laboratory that C. Todd discovered what was later to be called the "Todd phenomenon". This demonstrated – in the epoch of the dogma "one gene, one polypeptide chain" – that an immunoglobulin chain was coded for by at least two different genes.

In 1959, the Department of Analytical Immunochemistry was created for Jacques Oudin at the Pasteur Institute. It was here that he made his third major observation, the discovery of idiotypy. The subsequent development and central importance of this concept is evident.

A man of extreme rigor, both scientifically and morally, Jacques Oudin left an indelible mark on the development of immunology. His intellectual processes and his approach to experimental questions were of exceptional originality. For those of us who had the immense privilege of working with him, he was a constant source of lessons, which were occasionally difficult but always tempered by extreme kindness, and which were communicated in an atmosphere of complete intellectual freedom.

P.-A. Cazenave