

## OBITUARY

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**Obituary – Professor Dr. Robert J. Lukes**

Dr. Robert John Lukes was born on June 14, 1922, in Cleveland, Ohio, of Czech ancestry. He graduated from Western Reserve University in 1943 and from Loyola University School of Medicine, Chicago, in 1947. From 1952 to 1953 he served as Chief of Pathology for the Korean Theater Laboratory and became Chief of Hematopathology at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. From 1958 to 1962 he was a special lecturer in hematology and Clinical Associate in Pathology at Georgetown University.

Dr. Lukes joined the University of Southern California as Professor of Pathology in 1962, serving as Chief of Hematopathology at the LAC-USC Medical Center until his retirement in 1986. He continued as emeritus and was honored by the USC with a Distinguished Emeritus Award. After his retirement he also worked as a consultant for the Scripps Clinic in La Jolla.

Dr. Lukes had a special place in his heart for Europe. In addition to spending a half-year sabbatical in London in 1973–1974, he gave a large number of lectures and held two tutorials (in Holland and Greece). On the occasion of his lecture on the “Pathology of the white pulp of the spleen” at the congress of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Hämatologie in 1968*, he was elected corresponding member of this society.

In the 1960s, Lukes devoted his studies especially to the pathology of Hodgkin’s disease, and in 1963 he described six types of Hodgkin’s disease. Unfortunately, they were condensed into four types at the Rye conference (1965). These are still today the basic subentities of Hodgkin’s disease and are meanwhile applied worldwide. They have proven to be clinically relevant. It was a fortunate coincidence that they came into existence at approximately the same time as the first successful therapeutic measures by Vera Peters and, somewhat later, Henry Kaplan. A new era had dawned; Hodgkin’s disease had become a curable lymphoma.

From 1972 on, Dr. Lukes and his colleague Dr. Robert Collins shared a basic idea with the Kiel group, namely that of deriving malignant lymphomas from the immunologically defined types of lymphocytes. Thus the so-called Lukes-Collins classification and the Kiel classification evolved simultaneously, the latter introduced by the European Lymphoma Club. Although the European Lymphoma Club managed to eliminate the initial reservations against the terms “germinoblastic” and “germinocytic” lymphomas (by replacing them with “centroblastic” and “centrocytic”), we unfortunately never succeeded in reaching a compromise that would have resulted in a uniform nomenclature. Nevertheless, in 1983 a joint publication, entitled “Concordance of the Kiel and Lukes-Collins classifications of non-Hodgkin’s lymphomas,” appeared. Professor Lukes wanted to concentrate mainly on the USA, while he considered Europe to be our responsibility. Later, the convergence became even more intensive, as was apparent at the last two Lukes Conferences (1992 and 1993). Rather than promoting his own classification, Lukes left room for a comprehensive presentation of the Kiel classification.

Robert Lukes was more than a mere lymphoma pathologist; he was equally at home in all areas of hematopathology. The examination of bone marrow led to a particular technique of embedding; he embedded little bits of aspirated sternal marrow and was thus able to investigate smears and sections of the same sample.

A few years before his death, Lukes’ lifework appeared. This was *Tumors of the Hematopoietic System* in the series *Atlas of Tumor Pathology of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology*, which he authored together with R. D. Collins. It was submitted in 1988 (!) and not published until 1992. This does cause one to wonder, and it did not contribute to the publicity of the work, which is a pity, because the clear, comprehensive descriptions and the abundance of excellent illustrations are an almost inexhaustible source from which even the experienced reader can learn.

Robert Lukes was an excellent morphologist with an instinct for biological entities. Conceptually, all of his studies on Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphomas were founded on two basic experimental findings: lymphocytes are transformable, and they consist of functionally different types (especially B and T cells and their variants). Thus he always thought of form and function together. This made his many papers and lectures so fascinating.

Robert Lukes was a dedicated teacher and always a helpful colleague. A large number of US clinicians and pathologists rallied around him. Not only did they admire him; they were also his friends. They knew that everything Lukes did and said was sincere and depend-

able. The basis of Robert Lukes' humanity was his deep religiousness and his incomparably harmonious family life. This basis held up even after he was struck by a relentless, slowly progressive illness. The crucial question for him became the question of what is really important in life. And this question was more profound than any scientific discussion.

Robert Lukes died suddenly on December 26, 1994, in the care of his wife, Janet. Hematopathology has lost a pioneer and many colleagues have lost a good friend. For me he was more: a true friend. One has very few such friends in life. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude.