

## The neurology community mourns the passing of Dr. John F. Kurtzke

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On December 1, 2015, John F. Kurtzke died at the age of 89. With him, the neurology community lost one of its legends and most respected and inspirational leaders.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) was a major focus of his career as a physician and a researcher; another was epidemiology. John Kurtzke's dedication to the study of MS never waned throughout his life. In 1955 he established the world famous Disability Status Scale, refined in 1983 with the Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS), which is still the most commonly used disability scale for MS. His pioneering work—based on the study of large military cohorts—mapped the geographic gradients of MS throughout the world and defined the major risk factors for MS onset and progression. Through this he helped establish the discipline of neuroepidemiology, a term he introduced in 1967 with Len Kurland and Milton Alter. He was a founding member of the American Academy of Neurology's Neuroepidemiology Section.

John F. Kurtzke was a full professor of Neurology and Community and Family Medicine at Georgetown University as well as Chief of Neurology Services at the Veterans Administration Hospital from 1963 until retiring in 1995. He was also a consultant in Neurology at Bethesda Naval Hospital and held academic appointments/visiting professorships at more than 40 colleges and universities around the world. In retirement, Dr. Kurtzke continued to serve as a consultant to the Veterans Administration as well as deliver numerous lectures and publish papers, including in the *Journal of Neurology* as recently as 2012.

The neurological community acknowledged his outstanding contribution to the study of MS through many awards including in 1999 the Charcot Award by the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation and in 1997 the Dystel Prize for MS research by the American Academy of Neurology. In 2009, the Consortium of MS Centers and the American Academy of Neurology Foundation created the John F. Kurtzke Clinician–Scientist Three-Year Award, a jointly sponsored fellowship in multiple sclerosis research, “to honor the contributions of Dr. Kurtzke and inspire new MS healthcare professionals to follow in his path”. A fitting legacy for a man who so helped define MS research over the last 50 or more years.

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