W. W. SUTOW
Visiting Lecturer in Pediatric Oncology

Thursday, January 21, 2010
Noon – 1 p.m.
R11.1100, Rooms 1-3
Presented by The Division of Pediatrics
W. W. SUTOW, M.D., was a quiet revolutionary. This gentle, soft-spoken man combined a great compassion for human suffering with an unshakable commitment to scientific principles. His work helped establish the discipline of pediatric oncology. In doing so, he helped bring about a fundamental change in our approach to cancer treatment. By advocating chemotherapy as a viable alternative to radiation therapy and surgery, he produced some of the most dramatic results ever achieved in pediatric oncology.

Sutow began his medical career just after World War II, a difficult time for Americans of Japanese descent. He was appointed Director of Pediatric Research for the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC), where he soon earned a reputation for keen observation and documentation of detail in studying the effects of radiation on young survivors of the bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

When Sutow left the ABCC in 1954, Grant Taylor, M.D., convinced him to come to Houston and help form a Section of Pediatrics at M. D. Anderson Hospital. From a four-bed corner in a ward, Pediatrics at M. D. Anderson grew into a full-fledged division, thanks to the initiatives and innovations of Taylor, Sutow and Margaret Sullivan, M.D., who had all been colleagues in Japan.

Popular opinion was skeptical of the value of drugs in treating cancer. Surgery and radiation therapy were the treatments of choice. Sutow was convinced chemotherapy could be effective against childhood solid tumors, but he faced an uphill battle against established beliefs.
Sutow introduced the use of the drug vincristine sulfate for the treatment of Wilms’ tumor, which helped make it one of the most curable of childhood solid tumors. His treatment regimens for osteosarcoma resulted in survival rates of more than 60 percent, where the cure rate had been 20 percent at best before the addition of chemo-therapy. Breakthroughs such as these led to the first pediatric intergroup study of Wilms’ tumor and, later, to the development of similar studies for other cancers. Many of Sutow’s findings were documented in the textbook Clinical Pediatric Oncology, which he edited in 1973 and 1977.

While the scientific side of Sutow quietly amassed a body of information that would break down barriers to the treatment of childhood cancer, the compassionate side of the man built an unforgettable rapport with patients and families. Young patients would wait expectantly in their doorways or beds for Sutow to make evening rounds. They called it “round-up time,” and eagerly offered hands or feet for Sutow to decorate with a flower or perhaps a butterfly, drawn on with a ballpoint pen. These they guarded, for as long as possible, against the ravages of soap and water.

When he wasn’t studying cancer, Sutow often studied seashells. He was a serious student of shells, amassing an impressive collection. He was captivated by the growth and development of shells, just as he was fascinated by those same processes in children. With the help of a photographer friend, Sutow had many of his shells photographed. He even had some of them X-rayed to show the intricate patterns in shell structure.

Sutow will be remembered for his role in a long list of achievements in the treatment of children with cancer, including:
• adjuvant and multidrug chemotherapy;
• multidisciplinary cancer therapy;
• statistical surveillance and evaluation of results;
• cooperative group participation in research;
• prompt publication for documentation and dissemination of new knowledge.

During the course of his career, Sutow wrote more than 200 scholarly articles and reports and contributed material to about 20 textbooks, including his own.

Though Sutow successfully fought to change established attitudes toward the treatment of childhood solid tumors, he lost one final battle in 1981: his own battle with cancer. The W. W. Sutow Visiting Lecturer allows family, friends, professional associates and former trainees to celebrate the life of a man who lived for others.
Tom Curran, Ph.D., FRS, is the deputy scientific director of The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute. He also is professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, professor of Cell and Developmental Biology, and associate director of Translational Genomics within the Penn Genome Frontiers Institute, all at the University of Pennsylvania.

Curran’s research has concentrated on the molecular biology of the brain’s growth and development, with the goal of finding new treatments for childhood brain tumors—the focus of his laboratory at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. His work has been supported by grants from the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, as well as the Brain Tumor Society and the Children’s Brain Tumor Foundation.
tumor research. It was during a week spent interacting with young brain tumor patients at St. Jude’s that Curran gained inspiration to launch a new project in medulloblastoma. He continued his research in childhood brain tumors when he joined The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia in 2006. This work led to the opening of a clinical trial to test a new treatment for medulloblastoma in January 2009.

A member of the editorial boards of numerous scientific journals, Curran has presented hundreds of invited lectures around the world and has authored more than 250 peer-reviewed publications. He was ranked fourth in the world among high-impact researchers in molecular biology between 1988 and 1992 by the Institute for Scientific Information and is currently listed as a Highly Cited Scientist in three distinct fields (neuroscience, molecular biology and genetics, and microbiology). He has served as President of the American Association of Cancer Research and on the Board of Scientific Advisors of the National Cancer Institute. In 2005 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, the national scientific academy of the United Kingdom. Most recently, Curran was elected to the Institute of Medicine.

When Curran is not devoting time to his research, he can be found spending time with his family at home in Philadelphia. His 5-year-old daughter, Ally, takes up the majority of his time outside of the laboratory.
W. W. SUTOW
AWARD RECIPIENTS

1990
TAKEO TAKEDA, M.D.
Hokkaido Cancer Center,
Sapporo National Hospital
Sapporo, Japan

1991
GIULIO J. D’ANGIO, M.D.
Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

1992
JOSEPH F. FRAUMENTI, JR., M.D.
National Cancer Institute
Bethesda, Maryland

1993
GERTRUDE B. ELION, D.Sc.
Burroughs Wellcome Co.
Durham, North Carolina

1994
GARRETT M. BRODEUR, M.D.
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

1995
MALCOLM K. BRENNER, M.D., Ph.D.
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
Memphis, Tennessee

1996
WILLIAM J. SCHULL, Ph.D.
The University of Texas Health Science Center
Houston, Texas

1997
CHARLES B. PRATT III, M.D.
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
Memphis, Tennessee

1998
NORMA WOLLNER, M.D.
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
New York, New York

1999
ALFRED G. KNUDSON JR., M.D., Ph.D.
Fox Chase Cancer Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2000
STANLEY J. KORSMEYER, M.D.
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Boston, Massachusetts

2001
ROBERT MICHAEL BLAÉSE, M.D.
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland

2002
SARAH S. DONALDSON, M.D.
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford, California

2003
JACLYN A. BIEGEL, Ph.D.
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2004
JOANNE KURTZBERG, M.D.
Duke University Medical Center
Durham, North Carolina

2005
HAROLD M. MAURER, M.D.
University of Nebraska
Omaha, Nebraska

2006
JOANNE WOLFE, M.D., M.P.H.
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and
Children’s Hospital
Boston, Massachussets

2007
ME LI SSA M. HUDSON, M.D.
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
Memphis, Tennessee

2008
GUISEPPE MASERA, M.D.
Pediatric Clinic of San Gerardo Hospital
Milan, Italy