

Eugene Floyd DuBois

June 4, 1882 — February 12, 1959

Eugene Floyd DuBois, Professor Emeritus of Physiology at Cornell University Medical College and one of the great medical scientists of our time, died on February 12, 1959. He was born June 4, 1881, on Staten Island, New York. He was educated at Harvard University, from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1903. From Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons he received his doctorate of medicine in 1906. Following an internship at the Presbyterian Hospital in New York, he pursued postgraduate studies in medicine and physiology in Germany.

In 1910 he returned to become instructor in applied pharmacology at the Cornell University Medical School. The following year, under the stimulation of Graham Lusk and with the financial aid of the Russell Sage Institute of Pathology, he established a laboratory for investigation of human calorimetry. He acted as medical director of the Russell Sage Institute of Pathology from 1912 to 1951. He became Associate Professor of Medicine at Cornell in 1919 and was Professor of Medicine there from 1930 to 1940 and Professor of Physiology from 1941 to 1951.

Eugene DuBois was a man who was fortunate in acquiring early in his professional life an absorbing interest in a fundamentally important and relatively new branch of medicine. His pioneering venture in calorimetry, small and modest at its inception, was destined to have an extraordinary influence on the development of medical science. In a relatively short time there came from DuBois's laboratory contributions on metabolic disturbances in typhoid fever, tuberculosis, malaria, pernicious anemia, leukemia, thyrotoxicosis, nephritis, and cardiac disease. With his cousin, Delafield DuBois, he established a relatively simple formula for the estimation of surface area, now recognized throughout the world as basic to the study of human nutrition and metabolism. With other associates, he demonstrated the physical mechanisms of fever and the applicability of van't Hoff's law to variations in total metabolism in fever. Inferences from this work in calorimetry led directly to remarkable studies and to formulations concerning skin temperature and heat radiation.

His laboratory early became a mecca for young clinical investigators, who included Francis Peabody, James Howard Means, Joseph Aub, David Barr, William McCann, John P. Peters, Soma Weiss, Samuel Z. Levine, Edward Mason, and Nils Paul Larsen. Through these, his pupils, his influence penetrated most of our medical schools and large teaching hospitals.

This influence was extraordinary and was attributable only in part to his mastery of experimental procedure and the intrinsic value of his scientific contributions. It derived more from his own character and personality. Inspiration came to others from his abiding faith in principles of scientific and personal conduct, from his integrity and tolerance, from his sympathetic understanding of the problems of those about him, from his clear expression, unfailing courtesy, and true humility.

Dr. DuBois's military record in the service of his country was one of remarkable achievement and constant contribution. It was pursued so quietly and at times so secretly that few, even of his friends, realized its extent or significance. In the fields of submarine warfare and aviation medicine he was an outstanding authority. For heroism in the conduct of hazardous experiments during World War I he received the Navy Cross. His service during World War II was recognized by Commendation and Ribbon Bar. He was captain in the Medical Corps of the U. S. Naval Reserve from 1927 to 1950.

Dr. DuBois received many honors. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. He served as president of the American Society for Clinical Investigation, the Association of American Physicians, the Harvey Society, and the Institute of Nutrition. He was recipient of the Kober Medal of the Association of American Physicians in 1947 and the Medal of the New York Academy of Medicine in 1956.

David P. Barr