MEMORIAL ARTICLE

# Maxwell Myer Wintrobe: a famous hematologist before the birth of hematology

Ryszard W. Gryglewski[1], Robert Kyle[2], Artur Jurczyszyn[3]

1 Department of the History of Medicine, Jagiellonian University Medical College, Kraków, Poland
2 Division of Hematology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, New York, United States
3 Plasma Cell Dyscrasias Center, Department of Hematology, Jagiellonian University Medical College, Kraków, Poland

This year marks the 120th birth anniversary of Maxwell Myer Wintrobe, one of the most important figures in the history of 20th century medicine. He contributed to studies on the mechanism of pernicious and sickle cell anemia as well as those on copper metabolism and Wilson disease. Known to this day as the Wintrobe indices, the calculation of the average cell size as well as the measurements of corpuscular volume in cubic microns, corpuscular hemoglobin concentration in percentage, and hemoglobin content in picograms are basic elements for blood analyses, both in the research and clinical laboratory. Wintrobe's famous textbook entitled *Clinical Hematology*, first published in 1942, went through many editions and still remains one of the most influential sources of knowledge in the field.[1,2]

During the decades of his scientific career, Wintrobe worked successively at Tulane University in New Orleans (1927–1930), Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore (1930–1943), and finally at the University of Utah College of Medicine (1943–1986), where he was appointed as Professor of Internal Medicine. In addition to his research achievements, Wintrobe was the founder of a modern system of training in hematology, thus creating one of the largest and most influential schools with 170 graduates, many of whom later gained significant positions in the world of science.[2,3]

Wintrobe was a member of many scientific societies, including the Association of American Physicians, the Western Association of Physicians, the Association of Professors of Medicine, and the American and International Societies of Hematology. He also became Master of the American College of Physicians. In 1973, he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, where he was nominated as the first chairman of the Section on Human Genetics, Hematology, and Oncology. In recognition of his merits, the University of Utah appointed Wintrobe as Distinguished Professor of Internal Medicine. Despite his emeritus status, he continued working in hematology.[2]

Wintrobe was born on October 27, 1901, to a Jewish family from eastern Poland, which was then under Austrian rule. Most written sources state that he was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. However, in 2007, Herbert L. Fred claimed that "A few days before he died, Max told his daughter, Susan, that he was born in Austria of Jewish parents named 'Weintrub' " and pointed out that "his graduation yearbook listed his birthplace as Sanok, Poland."[1] Certainly, this interesting information needs verification.

Correspondence to:
Artur Jurczyszyn, MD, PhD, Plasma Cell Dyscrasias Center, Department of Hematology, Jagiellonian University Medical College, ul. Kopernika 17, 31-501 Kraków, Poland, phone: +48601539077, email: mmjurczy@cyf-kr.edu.pl
Received: October 15, 2021.
Accepted: October 15, 2021.
Published online: October 27, 2021.
Pol Arch Intern Med. 2021; 131 (10): 16124
doi:10.20452/pamw.16124


## ARTICLE INFORMATION



**HOW TO CITE** Gryglewski RW, Kyle R, Jurczyszyn A. Maxwell Myer Wintrobe: a famous hematologist before the birth of hematology. Pol Arch Intern Med. 2021; 131: 16124. doi:10.20452/pamw.16124

## REFERENCES

1 Fred HL. Maxwell Myer Wintrobe: new history and a new appreciation. Tex Heart Inst J. 2007; 34: 328-335.

2 Valentine WN. Maxwell Myer Wintrobe. In: Biographical Memoirs. National Academy of Sciences. 1990; 59: 446-472.

3 Kushner JP. Maxwell Myer Wintrobe: influential teacher in the field of hematology. The Hematologist. 2007; 4.