

In memoriam: Dr. John H. Laragh

Włodzimierz Januszewicz¹, Andrzej Januszewicz²

¹ Professor Emeritus, Warsaw, Poland

² Department of Hypertension, Institute of Cardiology, Warsaw, Poland



Włodzimierz Januszewicz honoring John H. Laragh with the medal of Polish Cardiac Society, Hypertension Center, Cornell University, New York

John H. Laragh died on March 20, 2015, at the age of 90 years. He was born and grew up in Yonkers, New York. He attended a medical school at Cornell University and did his residency in medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University. He spent a substantial part of his early career at Columbia University, being fascinated by hypertension, and eventually became Chief of the Division of Nephrology. In 1975, he accepted an offer to establish an interdisciplinary cardiovascular center at the Cornell University Medical Center, New York, which became a leading center in hypertension in the United States.

John H. Laragh and his team, including his wife, Dr. Jean Sealey, had changed the landscape of hypertension, creating the concept known as the vasoconstriction-volume model of hypertension, defining hypertension as renin-dependent or volume-dependent or a combination of both.

John H. Laragh strongly believed that developing drugs that block the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone (RAA) system would have a wide spectrum of clinical benefits in cardiovascular disease.

Several decades of his research resulted in a substantial number of basic and clinical research papers that provided stimuli for the widespread use of three different types of drugs blocking the RAA system: β -blockers, angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, and angiotensin II receptor blockers.

John H. Laragh has been a great inspiration to many researchers and clinicians, and his outstanding achievements led him to discoveries that were crucial to our current understanding of the RAA system and to the development of effective therapies of hypertension. A fundamental lesson of this creative work was that hypertension could no longer be regarded as a monolithic concept; rather, heterogeneous mechanisms must be taken into account when describing this condition and choosing appropriate therapies.

The career of John H. Laragh represented an enormous contribution, and thanks to his creative research, millions of people around the world have been protected from stroke and other cardiovascular complications.

The list of hypertension researchers who trained and published with John H. Laragh is spectacular. He made contribution to numerous organizations and will be remembered as a founder of the American Society of Hypertension and its first president. His long list of prestigious awards is also highly impressive.

John H. Laragh will be remembered for his innovative and truly pioneering research and leadership in the field of hypertension—he was widely recognized in the United States and across the world.

Correspondence to:

Professor Andrzej Januszewicz, MD, PhD, Klinika Nadciśnienia Tętniczego, Instytut Kardiologii, 04-628 Warszawa, Poland, phone: + 48 22 34 34 339, fax: +48 34 34 517, e-mail: a.januszewicz@ikard.pl

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