

IN MEMORIAM



It is with great sadness that I inform the Italian Society of Endocrinology that Dr Emil Steinberger, MD, a renowned endocrinologist and researcher passed away Sunday, October 12, 2008, after losing his long battle with lung cancer.

Dr Steinberger was the first President of the American Society of Andrology and played an important role in the initiation and development of the ASA. Our field has lost a true renaissance man, talented in many areas beyond just reproductive biology and medicine.

Much of his career focused on the hormonal control of spermatogenesis. His studies on spermatogenesis began in the mid 1950's when he worked together with the famed Dr Warren O. Nelson. His early research set the stage for work that continues in many andrology laboratories today and included studies of the gonadotoxicity of alkylating agents, *in vitro* penetration of cervical mucus by sperm, human sperm cryopreservation, effects of heat, ischemia, and cryptorchidism on spermatogenesis and the controls of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis. In the mid-1970's, he published a paper on the frequency distribution of sperm counts of fertile and infertile males, noting that sperm counts, except at the extreme low-end of the scale (in the absence of other deficiencies), were not major factors in a couple's infertility, setting the stage for the development of sperm function testing.

Other clinical works focused on the diagnosis and treatment of the infertile couple (together as a couple) and endocrine manipulation of hyperandrogenic women and those with other causes of ovulatory dysfunction. With his wife, Dr Anna Steinberger, testicular organ culture and *in vitro* spermatogenesis were attempted. Together they reported on the presence of an FSH-inhibiting protein secreted by Sertoli cells that acted on the pituitary. Today we know that this protein is inhibin. Work in his department focused on androgen and FSH regulation of spermatogenesis and Sertoli cell function, Leydig cell steroidogenesis, sexual behavior, and other aspects of reproductive biology. Dr Steinberger was honored for these achievements as the recipient of the Distinguished Andrologist Award in 1987 by the American Society of Andrology. He had served as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Reproductive Medicine and Biology at the University of Texas Health Science Center School of Medicine, before developing the Texas Institute for Reproductive Medicine together with Drs Keith Smith and Luis Rodriguez-Rigau.

In his later years, Dr Steinberger became an author and published two books on his life before, during, and after World War II. The first, "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea", is an amazing story chronicling his family's flight from Poland, escape from extermination camps and imprisonment in a Soviet Labor Camp. After the war, he attended the Medical School, prior to moving to the United States. His second book, "The Promised Land: Woes of an Immigrant", relates his experiences beginning with his arrival in the United States. Ultimately, there is much to be learned from his story of perseverance to overcome great obstacles in life to become a leader in our field -- A leader who will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

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