Eugene M. Farber, MD (1917-2000)

Eugene M. Farber, MD, for 36 years professor and chairman of the Department of Dermatology, Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, Calif, and president of the Psoriasis Research Institute of Palo Alto, Calif, died November 10, 2000, after a brief illness. Farber was 83 years old.

He was a native of Buffalo, NY, receiving his bachelor of arts degree from Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, and his medical degree from the University of Buffalo in 1943. His residency years were spent at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn, where he also received a master of science degree from the University of Minnesota. For 4 decades, Farber served Stanford University’s Department of Dermatology as clinician, educator, research investigator, and its chairman. In his long career, which continued until a few days before his death, he lectured in 44 different countries, received honorary membership and awards from 26 foreign dermatological societies, and was the author or coauthor of 225 publications, including monographs, textbooks, chapters in textbooks, and original journal articles.

Even as a resident in training at the Mayo Clinic, he began to fulfill his lifelong passion for furthering our understanding and improving the treatment of skin diseases, collaborating as a principal investigator in clinical studies and demonstrating the effectiveness of the first antihistamine, Benadryl. Before this, there was no effective treatment for allergic reactions.

In 1948, he came west to join the faculty of Stanford. He supported himself in private practice while beginning his efforts to build a clinical care and teaching service for dermatology. In 1951, he was appointed director of the dermatology division at Stanford and was given a 4×8-ft cubicle as research space. From this humble beginning, during the next 36 years, Farber built a world-famous Department of Dermatology at Stanford. His program was known for its well-funded, insightful research by top scientists on the biology of the skin and, in particular, the epidemiology and treatment of psoriasis.

Until well into the 20th century, published knowledge of this disease was almost entirely descriptive. From the beginning of his career, Farber linked clinical observation with laboratory studies, and there was never a time when he and his associates were not using the investigative laboratory to expand clinical knowledge.

Farber worked toward improving the treatment of psoriasis with safety and efficacy. He supported the use of anthralin as the topical treatment of choice, first developing an effective low-strength hospital and day care regimen. Then, in 1990, he and his colleagues developed a short contact therapy, which made topical anthralin more useful. In the early 1970s, he also established one of the first hospital-based psoriasis day care centers, where patients received individual treatment on an ambulatory basis. In 1982, he initiated the concept of self-help workshops, which are now used in many dermatological centers. In the workshops, patients and their families are provided with information on the natural history, treatment, and psychosocioeconomic data through lectures and handout materials.

During his tenure, he collaborated with skin biologists and clinicians around the world, establishing at Stanford in 1971 the first International Symposium on Psoriasis. Several more symposia followed in 5-year intervals, documented with published proceedings.

Despite his love of research, his greatest academic pleasure was found in teaching the art and science of dermatology to medical students and physicians. He always emphasized to his faculty that teaching was an important part of their responsibilities. This was reflected in the fact that members of his staff received the students’ best-teacher award on several occasions. In the 1950s and 1960s, he pioneered a cross-disciplinary approach to training in dermatology, offering exposure to pediatric, veterinarian, and podiatric dermatology before any other program in this country. Stanford was also the first program on the West Coast to have a full-time dermatopathologist and photographer for teaching and research. More than 180 dermatologists graduated from the Stanford Department of Dermatology under his guidance from 1952 to 1986.

In his lifetime, he was honored by dermatology departments and societies all over the world, including the singular award of Master in Dermatology, given to him by the American Academy of Dermatology. He also received a Distinguished Alumni Award from his alma mater, the University of Buffalo.
Farber spearheaded and assumed leadership positions in many dermatological societies and organizations. He was on the board of directors of the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Dermatological Association, the Association of Professors of Dermatology, the Pacific Dermatologic Association, and the Society for Investigative Dermatology. In addition, he held editorial positions on many publications, including the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, *Scientific American*, *Skin and Allergy News*, and *Cuts*. He also served as president of the Association of Professors of Dermatology, the Pacific Dermatology Association, and the Society for Investigative Dermatology.

On retiring from his post at Stanford University in 1986, he assumed the presidency of the Psoriasis Research Institute, a unique nonprofit foundation, established by Russell Smith, Alejandro Zaffaroni (founder of ALZA Pharmaceuticals, Mountain View, Calif), and himself. They created a skin biology unit with a focus on the etiology, epidemiology, and treatment of psoriasis. Scholars from nearly a dozen countries outside the United States have studied at the Psoriasis Research Institute on fellowships or during sabbatical leaves.

While in high school and college, in addition to being an exceptional student, he was an excellent athlete, having performed as a champion hurdler and basketball player. He remained a loyal supporter of Stanford sports throughout his life.

He was also a devoted family man, marrying his life’s companion and best friend, Ruth, in 1944. They remained together for 56 years, raising 4 children and many large animals at their Portola Valley, Calif, home. He is survived by his wife; a son, Donald; daughters Charlotte and Nancy; grandchildren Elinor and Ben; and his great grandchild Henry.

He will be dearly missed by many who were influenced or cared for by him, including 2 generations of fellow physicians and students and thousands of grateful patients.

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**Correction**

Error in Placement of Figures. In the study titled “Foreign Bodies in Granulomatous Cutaneous Lesions of Patients With Systemic Sarcoidosis,” published in the April issue of the ARCHIVES (2001;137:427-430), Figure 4 and Figure 5 were accidentally transposed in the article and on the cover, where they are referred to as parts B and C.