

= Cornelius P. Rhoads =

Cornelius Packard " Dusty " Rhoads (June 9 , 1898 ? August 13 , 1959) was an American pathologist and oncologist , who was an administrator : he was director of Memorial Hospital for Cancer Research in New York beginning in 1940 , the first director of Sloan @-@ Kettering Institute beginning in 1945 , and the first director of the combined Memorial Sloan ? Kettering Cancer Center . For his contributions to cancer research , he appeared on the cover of the June 27 , 1949 issue of Time magazine under the title " Cancer Fighter . "

During his early years with the Rockefeller Institute in the 1930s , Rhoads specialized in anemia and leukemia , working for six months in Puerto Rico in 1932 as part of the Rockefeller Foundation International Health Board contingent . During World War II , he worked for the United States Army helping to develop chemical weapons and set up research centers . Research on mustard gas led to developments for its use in chemotherapy at Sloan Kettering .

In early 1932 , a letter Rhoads had written in November 1931 , which disparaged Puerto Ricans and claimed he had killed and intentionally injected cancer cells into his patients , was given by a lab assistant to Puerto Rican nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos . He publicized the letter in the Puerto Rican and American media , which led to a scandal , an official investigation , and a US whitewashing campaign to protect Rhoads and , by extension , Rockefeller interests . In the ensuing investigation , Rhoads defended himself , saying he had written his comments in anger and as a joke to a New York colleague . Neither Puerto Rico 's Attorney General nor the medical community found evidence of his or the project giving any inappropriate medical treatment , and the scandal was forgotten .

In 2002 , the controversy was revived . The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) , which had established the Cornelius P. Rhoads Memorial Award in 1979 , commissioned a new investigation . It was led by Jay Katz , emeritus professor at Yale Law School and a specialist in medical ethics . He concluded there was no evidence of unethical human experimentation , but the letter was so offensive that the prize should be renamed . AACR concurred and stripped the honor from Rhoads because of his racism .

= = Early life and education = =

Rhoads was born June 20 , 1898 , in Springfield , Massachusetts , as the son of an ophthalmologist , Dr. George H. Rhoads and his wife . He received his early education in Springfield , later attending Bowdoin College in Maine , where he graduated in 1920 . In 1924 , he received his M.D. from Harvard University , cum laude , and was class president . Rhoads became an intern at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital , and contracted pulmonary tuberculosis . During his treatment and recovery , he developed a lifelong interest in disease research .

= = Early career = =

After recovering from TB , Rhoads published a paper on the tuberculin reaction with Fred W. Stewart , who became his longtime colleague . Rhoads then taught as a pathologist at Harvard and conducted research on disease processes .

In 1929 Rhoads joined the staff of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research , now Rockefeller University , where he worked for Simon Flexner . He was also staff pathologist at Rockefeller Hospital . His early research interests included hematology and poliomyelitis . He worked at Rockefeller until 1939 .

= = Puerto Rico = =

While working for the Rockefeller Institute , in 1931 Rhoads was invited by hematologist William B. Castle 's to join his Rockefeller Anemia Commission , to conduct clinical research at Presbyterian Hospital in San Juan , Puerto Rico . This was part of the Rockefeller Foundation 's sanitary

commission on the island through the International Health Division . Castle 's research interest was pernicious iron deficiency anemia , specifically as caused by the parasitic hookworm , which was endemic on the island at rates of 80 % , and tropical sprue . An effective treatment for the latter had just been developed , although the disease 's causes remained obscure . As recently as 2010 , medical journal *NiETO Editores* reported that these conditions were a cause of high mortality in Puerto Ricans . The cause of tropical sprue has still not been identified , but since the 1940s , it can be treated with folic acid and a 3 to 6 @-@ month course of antibiotics .

Rhoads was to assist Castle , and they established a base in San Juan at the Presbyterian Hospital . Rhoads corresponded often with Simon Flexner at the Rockefeller Institute in New York regarding his research and career interests . In Puerto Rico , the Rockefeller group had more than 200 patients ; historian and ethicist Susan E. Lederer notes that , while referred to as patients , they were primarily clinical subjects whose conditions were studied to advance medical research . Because of the effects of anemia and the suspicion that tropical sprue was related to diet , Rhoads experimentally controlled patients ' diets . Lederer notes that in letters from this time , Rhoads referred to his patients as " experimental ' animals ' . " He wrote : " If they don ' t develop something they certainly have the constitutions of oxen . " Rhoads sought to experimentally induce the conditions he was studying in his patients rather than simply treat them . If they did develop tropical sprue , he could treat it with liver extract .

Castle wanted to perform a similar study in Cidra , in conjunction with the School of Tropical Medicine , which was doing similar research , but this was not approved . Rhoads also collected polio serum samples for his boss Flexner at the Rockefeller Institute , for which he was assisted by contacts at the university .

= = = Scandal = = =

On 10 November 1931 , Rhoads was at a party at a Puerto Rican co @-@ worker 's house in Cidra . After having some drinks , he left , finding his car had been vandalized and several items stolen . He went to his office , where he wrote and signed a letter addressed to " Ferdie " (Fred W. Stewart , a colleague from Boston , by then working at the Memorial Hospital for Cancer Research in New York) . He wrote the following :

" Dear Ferdie :

The more I think about the Larry Smith appointment the more disgusted I get . Have you heard any reason advanced for it ? It certainly is odd that a man out with the entire Boston group , fired by Wallach , and as far as I know , absolutely devoid of any scientific reputation should be given the place . There is something wrong somewhere with our point of view .

The situation is settled in Boston . Parker and Nye are to run the laboratory together and either Kenneth or MacMahon to be assistant ; the chief to stay on . As far as I can see , the chances of my getting a job in the next ten years are absolutely nil . One is certainly not encouraged to make scientific advances , when it is a handicap rather than an aid to advancement . I can get a damn fine job here and am tempted to take it . It would be ideal except for the Porto Ricans . They are beyond doubt the dirtiest , laziest , most degenerate and thievish race of men ever inhabiting this sphere . It makes you sick to inhabit the same island with them . They are even lower than Italians . What the island needs is not public health work but a tidal wave or something to totally exterminate the population . It might then be livable . I have done my best to further the process of extermination by killing off 8 and transplanting cancer into several more . The latter has not resulted in any fatalities so far ... The matter of consideration for the patients ' welfare plays no role here ? in fact all physicians take delight in the abuse and torture of the unfortunate subjects .

Do let me know if you hear any more news .

Sincerely , " Dusty " "

His unmailed letter was found by one of his staff and circulated among people at the Anemia Commission . When Rhoads learned of this , he quickly made a public apology at a meeting of all staff and doctors . A while later , he was dismayed to hear that the letter was going to be discussed at a meeting of the Puerto Rico Medical Association . With relations having deteriorated locally , he

returned to New York in December 1931 .

= = = Publicity and investigations = = =

At the end of December Rhoads ' former lab technician Luigi Baldoni resigned ; he later testified that he feared for his safety . In January 1932 he gave the Rhoads letter to Pedro Albizu Campos , president of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party . Albizu Campos sought publicity , sending copies of the letter to the League of Nations , the Pan American Union , the American Civil Liberties Union , newspapers , embassies , and the Vatican . In addition to distributing the letter to the media , Albizu wrote his own , charging that Rhoads was part of a US plot to exterminate Puerto Ricans . He linked the letter to other complaints about American imperialism , saying that the US governors in Puerto Rico encouraged labor emigration rather than improving employment , and promoted birth control , which was offensive to the many Catholic residents . Later that year Governor Beverley struggled with a greater political crisis than the Rhoads letter over his remarks encouraging birth control use on the island , which resulted in his being removed from office .

A photograph of the letter was published on January 27 , 1932 in La Democracia , the Unionist newspaper of Antonio Rafael Barceló , with a translation in Spanish of the entire letter . It did not support Albizu Campos ' theory of a US conspiracy against Puerto Rico . On February 13 , El Mundo published the entire letter , in both Spanish and English .

The Rhoads ' letter created one of the first crises for James Beverley , newly appointed as the acting Governor of Puerto Rico . He said the letter was a " confession of murder " and " a libel against the people of Puerto Rico " , and ordered an investigation , one of his first acts . Beverley said of Rhoads that " he was just a damned fool , ... a good doctor , but not very strong mentally on anything else . " Rhoads , already back in New York , released an official response to the media and the governor . He insisted that he was joking in his letter , which was intended to be confidential , calling it a " fantastic and playful composition written entirely for my own diversion and intended as a parody on supposed attitudes of some American minds in Porto Rico , " explaining that nothing " was ever intended to mean other than the opposite of what was stated . " Rhoads offered to return to clear things up , but never did . The governor 's inquiry concluded that Rhoads did not commit the acts included in his letter , nor any other crimes .

Rhoads and his work were investigated by the Puerto Rican Attorney General Ramon Quinones , with review of medical aspects by Dr. P. Morales Otero , representative of the Puerto Rico Medical Association , and Dr. E. Garrido Morales , representing the Commissioner of Health . Sworn testimony was taken from several of Rhoads ' patients as well as his colleagues , including Castle , William Galbreath , and George C. Payne . They reviewed the case files for the 257 patients treated by Rhoads and the Rockefeller Commission , including the 13 patients who died during this period . They found no evidence of the crimes described in Rhoads ' unmailed letter . The Attorney General and medical community joined in absolving Rhoads of the Nationalist charges that he was part of a US plot to exterminate Puerto Ricans . Rhoads was subject to separate investigations ordered by the acting American governor of Puerto Rico James R. Beverley and the Rockefeller Institute , and " neither ... was able to uncover any evidence that Dr. Rhoads had exterminated any Puerto Ricans . "

Confirmed in Lederer 's 21st century account , " records at Presbyterian Hospital in San Juan , Puerto Rico , where Rhoads had performed his research , revealed no patients in the young pathologist 's care had died under suspicious circumstances . " Additionally , the investigators were " unable to confirm Rhoads 's other claim (omitted in Time ' s account) that he had ' transplanted cancer into several patients . ' "

During the investigations , Ivy Lee , who handled public relations for the Rockefeller family , and a team at the Institute began a campaign to defend Rhoads ' reputation . He was seen as a promising researcher . The Rockefeller Foundation also wanted to protect its working relationship with medical organizations in Puerto Rico and avoid problems with critics of human experimentation in the US . During the early 1930s , there was a revival of the anti @-@ vivisectionist movement in the US , which also was concerned about the use of vulnerable populations as human subjects of

experimentation : children (especially orphans) , prisoners , and soldiers . As Lederer observed , " some members of the medical community ... monitored the popular and medical press . " Francis Peyton Rous of the Rockefeller Institute was editor of the Journal of Experimental Medicine through the 1930s and 1940s . Although it accepted few articles on clinical research , he was careful about their wording in an effort to avoid criticism by the anti @-@ vivisectionists .

Lee was given access to pre @-@ published versions of the articles on the controversy by both The New York Times and Time . He persuaded Time to eliminate the words " and transplanting cancer into several more " , from its published version of the letter . Also , based on the positive testimony of some patients , The New York Times headlined its article as " Patients Say Rhoads Saved Their Lives " and reported on this as well . Rhoads had returned to New York before the scandal broke in Puerto Rico . After the Attorney General 's report and that of the Rockefeller Institute in 1932 , the controversy quickly faded in the United States .

Reaction to the Rhoads scandal and controversy was mixed in the United States , in part due to the Rockefeller campaign . Starr says (from the 21st century) that his colleagues did not believe Rhoads ' spin that his letter was a " fantastic and playful composition ... intended as a parody . " Some were worried about Rhoads ' mental health at the time . A superior dismissed the incident as a case of local ingratitude . Time magazine headlined the incident as " Porto Ricochet " ; Starr suggests they meant that Rhoads 's humanitarian work in Puerto Rico had come back to bite him .

In Puerto Rico , Albizu Campos used the Rhoads scandal as part of his anti @-@ colonial campaign , attracting followers to the Nationalist Party . In 1950 , longtime Puerto Rican pro @-@ independence activists Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola tried to assassinate President Truman to bring their cause to the world stage . Collazo said that as a young man , in 1932 he heard Albizu Campos speak about the Rhoads letter and decided to devote his life to the Nationalist movement after that .

= = Hematology = =

Following his study in Puerto Rico , in 1933 Rhoads was chosen to lead a special service at the Rockefeller Institute in clinical hematology , to study diseases of the blood @-@ forming organs . He built on his research on anemia and tropical sprue . In 1934 Rhoads and another researcher published results of the success in using liver extract therapy to treat tropical sprue (and relieve anemia) . Their work was recognized as contributing benefit in treatment of the disease by others in the field .

= = Memorial Hospital and World War II = =

In 1940 , Rhoads was selected as director of Memorial Hospital , which was devoted to cancer care and research , and had recently moved into a new building . Rhoads was selected for his interest in clinical investigation in addition to laboratory research , as the hospital did research as well as treatment . He succeeded James Ewing , a noted oncologist . Ewing had written about cancer transplantation in 1931 , a subject which Rhoads referred to in his scandalous letter written in November of that year . In 1941 Rhoads was studying the use of radiation to treat leukemia .

During World War II , Rhoads was commissioned as a colonel and assigned as chief of medicine in the Chemical Weapons Division of the U.S. Army . He established the U.S. Army chemical weapons laboratories in Utah , Maryland , and Panama . For this work , he won the Legion of Merit in 1945 .

Due to his casualty studies on mustard gas from an accident during the war in Italy , Rhoads became interested in its potential for cancer treatment . For the rest of his life , his research interest was in developing chemotherapy for cancer treatment but he served primarily as an administrator and scientific director at Memorial and Sloan @-@ Kettering . From studies of mustard gas , he developed a drug called mechlorethamine or Mustargen . Its success in clinical trials during the war years was the basis for the development of the field of anti @-@ cancer chemotherapy . Rhoads also became interested in total body irradiation , which led to early work on chemotherapy .

= = Post @-@ war = =

In 1945 Sloan @-@ Kettering Institute was founded as a cancer research center , in the hopes that an industrial approach to research would yield a cure . It opened in 1948 . While still director of Memorial , from 1945 until 1953 Rhoads also served as the first director of the Sloan @-@ Kettering Institute . He was " praised by Memorial for his ' essential role in the evolution of the hospital into a modern medical center . ' " As director of Sloan @-@ Kettering , he had oversight as well over research related to Department of Defense radiation experiments through 1954 . For instance , that year , a Sloan @-@ Kettering team began a multi @-@ year study of " Post @-@ Irradiation Syndrome in Humans . "

In 1953 , Rhoads stepped back slightly , becoming scientific director of the newly merged Memorial Sloan ? Kettering Cancer Center . He at the same time continued as the scientific director of Sloan @-@ Kettering operations . He also was an adviser to the United States Atomic Energy Commission regarding nuclear medicine . Some AEC funding supported Sloan @-@ Kettering research into the use of iodine to transport radiation to cancer tumors .

Rhoads continued to serve as scientific director of the Memorial Sloan ? Kettering Cancer Center until his death . He died of a coronary occlusion on August 13 , 1959 , in Stonington , Connecticut . In 1979 , on the 20th anniversary of his death , the American Association of Cancer Research established the Cornelius P. Rhoads Memorial Prize in his honor , as an annual award to a promising young researcher .

= = Revival of controversy = =

In 1982 , Puerto Rican social scientist and writer Pedro Aponte @-@ Vázquez discovered new information at various archives which raised questions about the investigations conducted on the 1932 work . Most prominent among his findings was a 1932 letter written by Governor Beverly to the associate director of the Rockefeller Foundation , stating that Rhoads had written a second letter " even worse than the first " and which , according to Beverley , the [Puerto Rican] government had suppressed and destroyed . In 1932 the Puerto Rican Attorney General , aided by top @-@ ranking Puerto Rican doctors , had investigated all of the work of Rhoads and the Rockefeller Project , including 13 deaths that occurred among nearly 300 patients treated . They found no evidence of wrongdoing or crimes . In addition , Rhoads ' superior at the Rockefeller Project had conducted a close investigation of the 13 patients who died under Rhoads 's tenure , but found no evidence of wrongdoing . In 1982 Aponte @-@ Vázquez urged the Puerto Rico Department of Justice to reopen the case , but it refused as Rhoads had been dead for so long .

In 2002 , Edwin Vazquez , a biology professor at the University of Puerto Rico , came across Rhoads ' 1932 letter and contacted the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) about it . Given the letter 's offensive nature , he demanded that Rhoads ' name be removed from the AACR award . Others also contacted the AACR , including Puerto Rico 's Secretary of State Ferdinand Mercado . Revival of the issue generated a fresh wave of publicity . The AACR , which said it had not known of the 1932 controversy , commissioned an investigation led by Jay Katz , a bioethicist from Yale University . Katz said although " there was no evidence of Dr. Rhoads ' killing patients or transplanting cancer cells , the letter itself was reprehensible enough to remove his name from the award . " The AACR agreed with his conclusion .

Eric Rosenthal of Oncology Times in 2003 characterized the case as the AACR having to " deal with the embarrassment of having history catch up to modern @-@ day sensibilities . " He wrote , " The complicated legacy of Cornelius ? Dusty ? Rhoads , who died in 1959 , should not cause society to promote nor deny his existence but should provide a perspective that neither condones what he wrote or thought ? or the whitewashing of the incident by institutions and media of the 1930s ? but that does give him due appropriate credit for his accomplishments as well as acknowledgement of his faults and sins . "

In 2003 the AACR renamed the award , stripping the honor from Rhoads posthumously . The AACR indicated that the new name would be retroactive and past awardees would receive updated

plaques .

= = Representation in other media = =

Aponte @-@ Vázquez self @-@ published a book in 2005 entitled The Unsolved Case of Dr. Cornelius P. Rhoads : An Indictment ; he writes on this topic via his blog and personal website .

In 2006 , the Puerto Rican political satire comedy group , Los Rayos Gamma , performed a parody of Rhoads with Jacobo Morales portraying a Cornelio Rodas as an insane , Frankenstein @-@ like scientist bent on the elimination of Puerto Ricans .

Roberto Busó @-@ García wrote and directed the dramatic film , The Condemned (2013) , which he said was loosely based on the Rhoads ' controversy in Puerto Rico .

= = Honors = =

Legion of Merit in 1945 for his work for the US Army during WWII .

Trustee of the Charles Kettering Foundation .

Awarded three honorary doctorates , two for science and one for law .

Posthumously awarded the Katherine Berkin Judd Award for outstanding contributions to oncology research .

The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) established the Cornelius P. Rhoads Memorial Award posthumously in his honor in 1979 . (In 2002 , it renamed the award due to Rhoads ' racism expressed in his 1932 letter .)