

In Memoriam – Sy Perry

Seymour Perry died on May 19, 2000. He was a pioneer in health technology assessment (HTA) and was keenly interested in medical history. He would surely have approved of this project.

Dr. Perry (or Sy, as he was usually known), was first trained as a cancer expert. He worked at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), first in the National Cancer Institute, and then as head of the Office of Medical Applications of Research (OMAR). OMAR developed the consensus development program, which became a model for a time for several other countries interested in developing evidence on health technology (2).

In 1980, Dr. Perry was named assistant surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service. That year, he was named the first (and only) director of the National Center for Health Care Technology (NCHCT), an agency created to lead a national effort in HTA and notably to give advice to determine which new medical technologies the government should finance through Medicare and other programs. The NCHCT was abolished in 1982 due to Reagan Administration federal budget cuts (1). During its brief life, NCHCT began to develop many important innovations, including “early warning” and priority setting among HTAs.

In 1985, Sy was a founder and the first president of the International Society for Technology Assessment in Health Care, subject of a study written with Banta, and summarized in this issue.

In 1993, he was appointed chairman of the department of community and family medicine at the Georgetown University Medical Center and director of the center’s Institute for Health Care Research and Policy. He was also professor of medicine and family medicine at Georgetown. He directed a World Health Organization Collaborating Center on HTA from this venue.

Sy agreed to develop a history of his own involvement in HTA, an earlier project planned by David Banta, but his death intervened.

REFERENCES

1. Perry S. The brief life of the National Center for Health Care Technology. *N Engl J Med.* 1982;107:1095-1100.
2. Perry S, Wilkinson S. The Technology Assessment and Practice Guidelines Forum: a modified group judgment method. *Int J Technol Assess Health Care.* 1992;89:289-300.