

## Obituary

### Jesse Efrem Edwards (1911–2008)



**J**ESSE E. EDWARDS, AN INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN cardiovascular pathologist, died in Rochester, Minnesota, United States of America, on May 18, 2008, at the age of 96 years. During his career, he co-authored nearly 800 publications on all types of cardiac disease. His contributions to our understanding and categorizing of malformed hearts were both numerous and exemplary. His two-volume *Atlas of Congenital Heart Disease* has been recognized as a landmark text, as were his detailed chapters on this topic in *Gould's Pathology of the Heart and Blood Vessels*.

Jesse Edwards was born in Hyde Park, Massachusetts, on July 14, 1911, to Max and Nellie Edwards, who were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. He graduated from Tufts Medical School in 1935, and served as Commander-in-Chief of the Central Medical Laboratories in the European theatre for four years during the second World War. After the war, he helped investigate the events that had taken place in the Concentration Camp at Dachau, and later testified at war crimes tribunals.

In 1946, he was invited to join the staff at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where he

began his life-long study of cardiovascular diseases. In 1960, he moved to Minneapolis-St. Paul to work at the Charles T. Miller Hospital, now the United Hospital, and the University of Minnesota. His current collection of more than 22,000 hearts represents an international resource that is housed in the Jesse E. Edwards Registry of Cardiovascular Disease at United Hospital.

During the 1950's, as open-heart surgery became a reality, his astute observations on various types of malformed hearts guided surgeons as they developed reparative and palliative procedures. The classifications he established for septal defects, transposed arterial trunks, common arterial trunk, and complex forms of congenitally malformed hearts have stood well the test of time. The grading system he developed in collaboration with Donald Heath for plexogenic pulmonary hypertension, and now known by their names, is still in use for categorization of patients with congenital cardiac left-to-right shunts. Not surprisingly, he was one of the first inductees into the "Paediatric Cardiology Hall of Fame", published in this journal.<sup>1</sup>

For the many trainees he mentored, it was not just his remarkable publications, his storehouse of knowledge, and his gift for organization and teaching that made him a giant among the pioneers of cardiovascular pathology. It was also his devotion to his family, and his kind and compassionate interactions with everyone he met, which made him a man to be admired and respected. Jesse Edwards was a beloved role model, both as a cardiovascular pathologist and as a human being. By example, he taught us so many things. He will be sorely missed.

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#### Reference

1. Becker AE. Jesse Efrem Edwards, MD. *Cardiol Young* 1999; 9: 411–418.