

Petar Alaupovic, PhD (1923–2014)

Petar Alaupovic, PhD, was known around the world as the father of apolipoproteins. He recognized the functional importance of the protein portion of lipoproteins and, using protein chemistry and immunology, developed a revolutionary classification system based on apolipoproteins and families of apolipoproteins resident on the major density classes of lipoproteins. He recognized and demonstrated the roles of these heterogeneous particles in the metabolism of lipoproteins and in the development of atherosclerosis, thus moving the science beyond the older classifications, which were based on lipid components and size of particles.

Over a career that continued past his retirement at age 88 as head of the Lipid and Lipoprotein Laboratory at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation (OMRF), he remained devoted to the importance of basic research as critical to the improvements in prevention and treatment of atherosclerotic disease and in medical care generally. He produced more than 330 scientific papers and supervised more than 20 PhD candidates and 72 postdoctoral fellows. He personally collaborated with, and influenced the, thinking of numerous colleagues around the world. He patiently helped clinical colleagues understand the complexities of his work, and helped us understand the importance of carefully done research. Progressively, over a span of decades, his work became better understood and accepted.

Born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, he attended school in Zagreb, Croatia, when his family moved there. He received his PhD in Chemistry from the University of Zagreb in 1956, and in 1957 accepted a research fellowship at the University of Illinois. His career at the OMRF began in 1960, where, by 1964, he had developed his new classification system based on apolipoproteins. His last scientific papers were published in 2013, the year before his death at the age of 91. He lectured widely, and was the recipient of numerous awards and honorary degrees.

Pierre, as he was known to his many friends, often spoke lovingly about the influence of his grandfather — a scholar, poet, and politician — who was perhaps part of the reason Pierre — a scholar, athlete, musician, outdoorsman, and connoisseur of fine wine — became a Renaissance man. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather.

His work continues to influence the field of lipid research. His warmth as a teacher and as a caring human being is and will be missed.