

**Professor W.N. ALDRIDGE**  
(1919 – 1996)

Norman Aldridge, recognised throughout the world as one of the most thoughtful and influential toxicologists, died on 30 June 1996.

In 1946 he was recruited to the newly established Toxicology Unit of the Medical research Council where he was head of the biochemical mechanism section and the Deputy Director of the Unit until his retirement in 1985.

He gained a PhD in biochemistry in 1952 for fundamental work on the mechanisms of interaction of organophosphorous compounds with enzymes. Being fascinated by the interaction of xenobiotics with the living organism, he was a master in linking basic research with solving public health problems related to chemical exposures through studying mechanisms of toxic effects. During his career he contributed among others to the understanding of the biochemical processes of oxidative phosphorylation, which conserve body energy, by studying toxic effects of organic tin compound.

His scientific expertise and advice was sought by science and public health authority worldwide. In 1975 his laboratory was nominated a World Health Collaborating Centre which very soon helped to resolve the public health problem of malathion poisoning of 2700 spray – workers. Investigations and experimental work carried out by Aldridge indicated that a decomposition product of some of malathion preparation was responsible for this poisoning. All this work led to changes in the manufacturing and storage procedures for malathion which prevented occurring such accident again.

When in 1981 a new poisoning outbreak occurred in Spain, known today as Toxic Oil Syndrome, as a toxicologist in charge of the WHO European programme on chemical safety I was requested to organize a special project with the aim to help public health authority in Spain to prevent spreading the illness and to recognize etiology of the disease. Creating a group of world best experts I rushed to Norman Aldridge to exploit his top knowledge and abilities. He then served in most excellent way as a member of the WHO/FIS Scientific Committee until his last days.

High scientific level of Norman Aldridge's laboratory at MRC Toxicology Unit, and his personal abilities attracted number of scientists and research trainees to his laboratory, both from Britain and abroad. I had privilege to be one of them carrying out an experimental research project on carbon disulfide and brain energy metabolism jointly with the scientific staff in his laboratory. Similarly, as other visitors I benefited tremendously from inspiring discussions with him and from his advices, I highly appreciated and enjoyed all numerous contacts with him afterwards which due to his generosity continued over the years. Sharing scientific knowledge with and between scientists was his passion and therefore he was very active in performing editorial work for international research journals. The International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health benefited from his work performance as an eminent contributing editor. He died contributing his thoughts and scientific knowledge included in the book "Mechanisms and Concepts of Toxicology", which was published in 1996. Science and friends will miss him sadly.

Stanisław TARKOWSKI

