Ernest Cotlove Award

Dr. Cotlove was one of the most enthusiastic and active organizers of ACLPS from our beginning. His absorbing interests and work helped mold our purpose and philosophy: progressive education in laboratory medicine and applied clinical research. Ernie, as he was affectionately known to his colleagues, was unshakably committed to the best possible patient care as a first priority. To him this meant thorough grounding in laboratory medicine and the highest attainable precision and accuracy in testing procedures and interpretation. Another characteristic was Ernie's genuine pleasure in mastering areas of new knowledge whether they be biochemistry, physiology, electronics, or golf. Thus, he was a stimulating and thorough teacher of residents, fellows, and attending physicians.

Ernest Cotlove's scientific and medical career started at NYU where, after finishing medicine in 1943, he pursued studies in renal physiology and chemistry. His outstanding ability to acquire knowledge and conduct innovative investigations earned him an invitation from James Shannon, then Director of the National Heart Institute at NIH. He continued studies of renal physiology and chemistry until 1953 when he became Head of Clinical Chemistry Laboratories in the new Department of Clinical Pathology being developed by George Z. Williams during the Clinical Center's construction. Dr. Cotlove seized the opportunity to design and equip the most advanced and functional clinical chemistry facility in our country.

Dr. Cotlove's career exemplified the progress seen in medical research and technology. He designed the electronic chloridometer that bears his name, in spite of published reports that such an approach was theoretically impossible. He used this innovative skill to develop new instruments and methods at the Clinical Center. Many recognized him as an expert in clinical chemistry, computer programming, systems design for laboratory operations, and automation of analytical instruments. He designed and closely supervised fabrication of an automated enzyme analyzer with temperature control to 0.02 °C. His informed consultations were much sought by research scientists and clinicians alike. He wrote lucidly, and unselfishly shared his new knowledge and research findings with all. Ernie was a dedicated pioneer; he never complained or hesitated to respond, even in the middle of the night, when called out because the computer broke down, or when called to interpret an emergency test result, or when rain flooded the computer room, and while covering the machines with tarps, he would joke with his night staff that they had the only computer in the world that could run underwater.

Dr. Cotlove was a founding member of ACLPS. Following his untimely death in 1970, ACLPS established a Cotlove Lectureship. This award is presented to a scientist (member of non-member of the academy) for outstanding contributions to the science of laboratory medicine.