

Obituary



Jerome K. Merlis

Dr. Jerome K. Merlis, nationally and internationally a major figure in the field of epilepsy, passed away on April 7, 1982, at the age of 68, after a protracted illness. He was born in New York on February 24, 1914, and received his M.D. from the University of Louisville in 1937, followed by an M.S. in neurophysiology in 1938. From 1940 to 1941 he was at Yale University as a Commonwealth Fellow in Neurophysiology with Professor John F. Fulton. From 1945 to 1946 he was Assistant Professor of Neurophysiology at the University of Louisville.

Developing an early interest in both experimental and clinical epilepsy, Dr. Merlis was Chief of the Epilepsy Center at the Cushing Veterans Administration Hospital in Massachusetts from 1947 to 1952, and then at the Boston V.A. Hospital from 1952 to 1956. During those years he also

was Instructor in Neurology at Harvard University and Clinical Associate in Neurology at the Massachusetts General Hospital. In 1956 he became Professor of Neurology and Clinical Neurophysiology at the University of Maryland, also Head of the Department of Neurophysiology and the Adult Seizure Clinic at its University Hospital, positions which he held until 1977 when he retired and was given emeritus status. It should be noted that his Professorship of Clinical Neurophysiology was one of the first so designated in the country.

The contributions of Professor Merlis to the world of epilepsy and electroencephalography were many, both organizationally and scientifically. He strongly supported and helped to develop the high standards of the American Board of Qualification to the American EEG Society, serving as Chairman of the Board from 1958 to 1962

and as President of the Society in 1960. He also was involved intensively in the affairs of the International League Against Epilepsy and served as President from 1968 to 1969. The journal *Epilepsia* (of the International League) was one of his main interests. He was Editor of the Third Series of this journal from 1951 to 1955—initially associated in this endeavor with William Lennox—and was a major force in its reestablishment in 1959 (as the Fourth Series). The journal has flourished to the present time.

The accomplishments of Dr. Merlis led to membership in the American Neurological Association and Fellowship in the American Academy of Neurology. He also functioned actively as a member of a National Institutes of Health Neurology Study Section and the Epilepsy Advisory Committee. He chaired the International Commission on Classification of the Epilepsies in 1969 and 1974, and his wise and critical counsel helped this difficult task immeasurably.

The scientific contributions of Dr. Merlis

were many. In experimental neurophysiology he established effects of cerebrospinal calcium levels on reflex activity and studied vestibular and cerebellar functions, as well as reflex myoclonus and cortical excitability cycles related to seizures. As a clinical electroencephalographer, he greatly advanced research in electroencephalographic activation, epilepsy, and the effects of sleep, drugs, and metabolic disturbances, especially liver disease. His clinical research in epilepsy specifically involved careful studies of psychomotor epilepsy and its treatment; these led to important articles on general clinical aspects and the neurophysiology of epilepsy.

The dedication of Jerry Merlis to his chosen area of endeavor and to his colleagues was great and recognized by us all. He was also devoted to his fine family, which was a great source of pleasure and satisfaction. He will be missed.

G. H. Glaser, M.D., Med.Sc.D.
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