



Robert L. Trelstad, MD

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For more than 30 years, Robert L. Trelstad, MD, was a physician and academician who focused his research on cell biology, developmental biology, and innovation in medical education.

Dr. Trelstad earned his undergraduate degree from Columbia University, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, in 1961 and his medical degree from Harvard cum laude, Alpha Omega Alpha, in 1966. He completed a residency in pathology at the Massachusetts General Hospital, followed by a position at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In 1972, Dr. Trelstad joined the faculty of Harvard Medical School as an assistant professor in pathology. From 1975 to 1981, he served as the Chief of Pathology at the Shriners Burns Institute in Boston.

Dr. Trelstad was named professor and chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in 1981. He led the department for 17 years until becoming the acting director and the Harold L. Paz, MD, Professor of Developmental Biology at the Child Health Institute of New Jersey in 1988. For seven years, Dr. Trelstad served a pivotal role in the funding, planning and construction of the then-new translational research facility.

As a national leader in cell biology and medical education, Dr. Trelstad served on numerous organizations and editorial boards, including the National Eye Institute, the Journal of Cell Biology, and as a member of a number of NIH study sections. He played pivotal roles in the growth and maturation of the American Society for Cell Biology and as president of the Society for Developmental Biology.

He was an associate editor of at least eight journals and served on the editorial advisory boards of many others. As an early adopter of computers in the classroom, he was co-founder and editor-in-chief of Keyboard Publishing, Inc., one of the first ventures in the area of online publications.

Dr. Trelstad authored more than 175 publications in journals as prestigious as Nature, The Journal of Cell Biology, The New England Journal of Medicine and The Journal of Biochemistry. He published studies in developmental biology, collagen morphogenesis and biochemistry and basement membrane assembly. He also co-authored chapters in leading pathology textbooks on tissue repair and regeneration. Dr. Trelstad was an investigator or principal investigator on 25 different research grants.

In 1992, Dr. Trelstad's educational accomplishments were recognized with what is now known as the Alpha Omega Alpha Robert J. Glaser Distinguished Teacher Award from the Association of American Medical Colleges. In honor of his contributions to graduate and undergraduate medical education in New Jersey, he received the Edward J. III Outstanding Medical Educator Award in 2007. Dr. Trelstad passed away in 2010.