Arthur C. Upton, MD

Arthur C. Upton, MD, former director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and AACR president (1963-1964), died Feb. 14, 2015, at the age of 92. He was emeritus professor of environmental medicine and clinical professor of environmental and community medicine at the University of Medicine and Dentistry-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Newark, New Jersey.

Upton, a renowned pathologist and expert in radiation biology, became an AACR member in 1954. In addition to his tenure as president, he was a member of the board of directors and elected as an inaugural fellow of the AACR Academy in 2013.

Upton was appointed director of the NCI by President Jimmy Carter in 1977. He used his extensive knowledge of environmental carcinogenesis to make environmental issues one of his first initiatives and sought closer cooperation between the NCI and governmental entities devoted to environmental regulation. As a strong supporter of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare’s antismoking proposals, Upton was a frequent target of the tobacco industry-backed pro-smoking lobbies.

In 1980, he became director of the Institute of Environmental Medicine at New York University, whose members were instrumental in establishing the Environmental Protection Agency and other environmental protection organizations. He was also an important contributor to the Consortium for Risk Evaluation with Stakeholder Participation, a multi-university research program aimed at developing methods for involving stakeholders in assessing the risks to human health and the ecosystem at nuclear weapons sites. He also worked with the NCI to define preventive oncology and how it could best be incorporated into the National Cancer Program.

Born Feb. 27, 1923, Upton received his medical degree in 1946 from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he also completed a rotating internship and residency in pathology. Other positions he held throughout his career include chief of the Pathology-Physiology Section at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory; professor and chair of the Department of Pathology and dean of the School of Basic Health Sciences at the State University of New York at Stony Brook; and adjunct professor of pathology and radiology at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine.

Upton published nearly 400 articles, books, and chapters throughout his career, most of which were about carcinogenesis and the carcinogenic effects of ionizing radiation.

In addition to the AACR, Upton also served as president of the International Association for Radiation Research, the American Society for Experimental Pathology, and the Radiation Research Society. He is an elected fellow of the Institute of Medicine and honorary life member of the New York Academy of Sciences. Other honors include the Ramazzini Award, the Fred W. Stewart Award from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the Comfort Crookshank Award for Cancer Research from Middlesex Hospital in London, and the Ernest Orlando Lawrence Award from the U.S. Department of Energy.