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REVIEW

The Most Influential Scientists in the Development of the Medical Informatics (2): Morris F. Collen

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MORRIS F. COLLEN (1913-2014)

Morris F. Collen was born in St. Paul, Minnesota (1, 2). He attended the University of Minnesota, where he earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1935. In 1938 he earned his MD "with distinction" from the School of Medicine and completed a residency in internal medicine at USC/ Los Angeles County General Hospital (3).

Dr. Morris Collen has had a profound influence, not only on the creation of the field of informatics, but also on health-care delivery and the creation of new models of payment and prevention. Dr. Collen's remarkable career began in 1942 when he was selected by Dr. Sidney Garfield, a surgeon, to join him as an internist in a California group practice. Drs Garfield and Collen subsequently worked with the industrialist Henry Kaiser, who is credited with creating one of the first comprehensive prepaid health plans for both office and hospital care. This led to the establishment of Kaiser Permanente in the post-World War II period plus a comprehensive infrastructure of hospitals in the Bay Area near San Francisco and near Portland, Oregon. In the subsequent decades, the Kaiser organization grew to become a nationwide healthcare provider with millions of enrollees.

Collen became a nationally recognized authority on the treatment of pneumonia during World War II. His gift for research showed early in his published studies in *The Permanente Foundation Medical Bulletin* of which he was long-time editor. After two decades as an internist with Kaiser Permanente, his career took a turn into early medical information technology. Morris Collen and his team set to work to automate the 10-year-old multiphasic health screening exam to develop a prototype electronic health record. Within a decade, Dr. Collen accumulated several millions of health checkup data sets on more than a million subjects, creating in the process not only a prototype electronic health record, but also a phenomenal and unique basis for research, and this despite the immaturity of the technology available in the fifties and sixties. For the pursuit of the scientific aspects of his work, Dr. Collen founded the Medical Methods Research Division within Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, to which he added the Division of Technology Assessment in 1979 that he directed until his retirement in 1983, at age 70.

He was elected to membership in the Institute of Medicine

of the National Academy of Sciences (1971), and has served in many capacities on many committees of the National Library of Medicine (3).

By the time of his retirement that year, Dr. Collen listed some 150 publications in his scientific output and had held appointments at multiple first-class universities, including Johns Hopkins and Stanford. His work „Hospital Information Systems“ and „Multiphasic Health Testing Services“, both became classics. The Morris F. Collen Award is given each year, when appropriate, to pioneers in the field of medical informatics who best exemplify the teaching and practice of Morrie Collen (3).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: NONE DECLARED

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