

Obituary

Paul Adriaan Jan Janssen, 1926–2003

Neuropsychopharmacology (2004) 29, 1579–1580. doi:10.1038/sj.npp.1300423

On Tuesday, November 11, 2003 Paul Adriaan Jan Janssen, Honorary Chairman of the Board of Directors of Janssen Pharmaceutica and of the Janssen Research Foundation died at age 77. He was a Foreign Corresponding Fellow of ACNP and an Honorary Fellow of CINP.

The son of Constant Janssen, a physician and Margriet Fleracker, Paul was born on September 14, 1926, in Turnhout, Belgium. His ancestors were farmers from the Kempen region of Belgium.

Paul's father worked his way up to become a successful general practitioner. In the early 1930s he acquired the exclusive right to import pharmaceuticals from Gedeon Richter in Hungary, and in the late 1930s he gave up his medical practice to devote himself entirely to the further development of his pharmaceutical business. By the time Paul had finished his secondary school education at St-Josef College in Turnhout, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps. To best prepare for such a career, he studied first physics, chemistry and biology, and obtained a Bachelor's degree in the natural sciences from the Faculte Notre Dame de la Paix in Namur in 1945. He continued his studies in medicine at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium) and the State University of Ghent, spending 6 months in the United States in the late 1940s to study and visit several pharmaceutical companies, before receiving his MD in 1951. After graduation from medical school, during his obligatory military service, he worked part-time in the Institute of Pharmacology, at the University of Cologne. To complete his training and receive his teaching certificate in pharmacology, he was also part-time assistant for about 6 years to Professor C Heymans, a Nobel Laureate, in the Institute of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at the University of Ghent.

In early 1953, Paul entered the family business with a vision to develop his research laboratory into an independent research facility dedicated to the development of new drugs. With a strong determination to succeed Paul embarked on research with a skeleton staff, and by 1958 the first five Janssen compounds (ambucetamide, isopropamide, disopromine, dextromoramide, and cinnarizine) were synthesized and introduced into clinical use. Haloperidol, which was to become one of the most extensively used drugs worldwide in the treatment of psychoses, was synthesized on February 15, 1958, and first introduced into clinical use in October 1959. The development of haloperidol was followed by the development of a series of 13 other neuroleptics: moperone, trifluperidol, pipamperone, benperidol, dehydrobenzperidol, spiperone, fluspirilene, pimozide, bromperidol, haloperidol decanoate, penfluridol,

bromperidol decanoate, and risperidone. By 2003, Paul Janssen and his team developed at least 70 compounds with four (haloperidol, levamisole, miconazole, and mebendazole) on the World Health Organization's list of essential drugs.

Simultaneous with the rapid development of new drugs, there was a rapid growth in research activities in Paul's laboratory, and the space at Eupharma, the name of the Janssen family company in Turnhout, was becoming too small to accommodate the steadily increasing number of personnel. On April 27, 1957 the research laboratories moved into one of the first new buildings erected in Beerse. About 1 year later, on May 2, 1958, the research laboratories in Beerse were given independent status in the family company, with Paul Janssen at age 32 becoming president and director of research of the new enterprise. Then on July 17, 1961 a private contract was drawn between Johnson & Johnson, an American Healthcare Company and the Janssen family, leading on October 24, 1961 to a merger of the two companies with a guarantee that the Belgian subsidiary would be permitted to retain its own identity and independence within the international group. On February 10, 1964 the name of the Belgian subsidiary of the American parent company was changed to Janssen Pharmaceutica N.V., which has remained its official name as of to-date.

After the merger with Johnson & Johnson, Janssen Pharmaceutica kept on growing. By 2003, Paul Janssen held over 100 patents, 22 honorary doctorates and professorships, and had authored or coauthored more than 850 scientific publications. He was the recipient of numerous scientific awards including the Taylor Manor Hospital Psychiatric Award in 1970, given that year to the few with outstanding discoveries in biological psychiatry. For his contributions to Belgium, he became in 1963 a Knight of the Order of the Crown, in 1978 an Officer of the Order of Leopold, and in 1990 was elevated to peerage.

I met Paul Janssen for the first time in the summer of 1964 on the campus of the University of Birmingham (England) during the 4th CINP congress. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I worked with Paul closely on the CINP executive, an organization of which he served as treasurer from 1974 to 1978 before being elected as president. The last time I saw Paul was in the early Spring of 2002 at a psychiatric hospital in Rouffach, France, near the Swiss and German border, at the meeting of a small group he was instrumental in bringing together to reconstruct the history of psychopharmacology. Each of us was asked to give a brief account of our contributions to the field, and Paul told us in his characteristically simple way, without wasting time and words, how he made the jump from observing amphetamine intoxication in cyclists to the use of amphetamine antagonism in screening for drugs, which might be useful in patients with delusions and hallucinations.

With his unique ability to combine science with business Paul Janssen was exceptionally successful in both endeavors. He carved his name in medical history through his

contributions to the pharmacotherapy of a wide variety of conditions, especially schizophrenia. However, in spite of all the recognition he received, Paul considered himself 'merely a man who has had a lot of luck in life.'

Paul had the good fortune while traveling from Paris to Antwerp to meet the attractive Dora Arts who was to become his adored wife in 1957. He appreciated the cyclist Eddy Merckx, cherished Goya's art, Debussy's music, Graham Greene's books, and enjoyed listening to folk songs, playing the piano, and an occasional game of chess. His main hobby was his work and he got his greatest pleasure from his family and friends. And most signifi-

cantly, Paul was a man who lived up to his maxim: 'Do it well and don't look back'.

Paul Janssen died in Rome while attending the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, of which he was a member since 1990. He is survived by his wife, five children, and 12 grandchildren. He will be dearly missed by his family, colleagues, and friends.

Thomas A Ban
*Toronto, Ontario,
Canada*