

Biographical Information
Robert D. Wells, Ph.D.
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Dr. Robert D. Wells (b. 1938) is the Welch Foundation and Regents Professor Emeritus, Institute of Biosciences and Technology, Texas A&M University System Health Science Center in Houston (2008-present). He was the Director of the Center for Genome Research at the Institute of Biosciences and Technology and was the Founding Director of the Albert B. Alkek Institute of Biosciences and Technology in Houston (1990-1994). He was the Robert A. Welch Endowed Professor in Chemistry and the TAMU Board of Regents Professor (1990-2008). Concurrently, he served as the Head of the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Previously, he was Chairman and Professor of the Department of Biochemistry in the Schools of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham for a ten-year period. From 1966-1981, Dr. Wells was Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the Department of Biochemistry. Wells participated in solving the genetic code (1964-66); his postdoctoral mentor, Dr. H.G. Khorana received the Nobel Prize in 1968 for these discoveries. He served a one-year sabbatical leave of absence on a Guggenheim fellowship at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and the University of California-San Diego in the mid 1970's.

Dr. Wells held an Adjunct Professorship in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (1991-2008). For many years, this was the sole Adjunct Professorship ever extended by the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. The laboratory of Dr. Wells has made numerous seminal contributions to our understanding of unusual DNA structures related to gene expression. Wells demonstrated that the breakpoints of genomic rearrangements coincide with non-B DNA conformations and that these genomic rearrangements are the basis of a number of gene mutations which cause diseases. Thus, a new paradigm was established for the role of unusual DNA conformations in human diseases.

Also, attention is currently focused on repeating triplet sequences that cause human hereditary neurological diseases. The genetic instabilities (expansions and deletions) which cause diseases such as myotonic dystrophy, fragile X syndrome, and Friedreich's ataxia, are due to the formation of non-orthodox DNA structures which enable slippage of the complementary strands that are accentuated by a number of genetic-biochemical factors. His laboratory has contributed more than 335 refereed articles, books, and book chapters. His book entitled, "Genetic Instabilities and Neurological Diseases," co-edited with Dr. Tetsuo Ashizawa (University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston) was released by Elsevier-Academic Press in July 2006. Dr. Wells has directed an active research program continuously funded by federal, state and foundation sources (1966-2008). He has conferred 31 Ph.D. degrees and has trained over 60 postdoctoral fellows.

Dr. Wells has received substantial honors, medals, and awards, presented distinguished or named lectures, and has provided extensive academic and industrial consultations in the U.S. and at least 27 foreign countries. He was the recipient of uninterrupted support from the National Science Foundation on a series of research grants entitled, "Studies with Defined Deoxyribonucleic Acids," from 1967-1994. Drs. Neal Lane and Arden Bement (Directors, National Science Foundation) stated that this 27-year funding with no hiatus is a record. Also, he served as an Associate Editor of the Journal of Biological Chemistry for 13 years and received the Citation for Distinguished Service from the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology on May 2, 1988. Furthermore, he received the Medal of the University of Lodz, Poland in April 1992 by Declaration of the University Senate for, "Contributions and Service to the Nation, Science, and Education". In April 1992, he presented the 6th H.G. Khorana Lecture at the invitation of the British Royal Society of Chemistry at Sheffield University, U.K.

Dr. Wells co-founded Alatech Associates Inc. in 1984 with Dr. John A. Thompson. He has actively participated with a number of chemical, pharmaceutical, biotechnology, petrochemical, venture capital, legal, and related companies. He has served in the following capacities: scientific consultant, strategic business planning, co-founder, member of Scientific Advisory Boards, intellectual property issues, Federal and State government regulations and licensing, design, construction, and implementation of research and office facilities, university-industry-government interfaces, etc. These companies include: Bethesda Research Laboratories, (BRL, Inc.), Eastman Kodak, Phillips Petroleum Company, Upjohn Corporation, Alatech Associates, Inc., Amoco Research Center, Syntex Corporation, Amgen, Banyu Merck, Dupont, and approximately thirty other companies.

The Distinguished Merit Award for Lifetime Career Achievements was presented to Dr. Wells in 1996 from Alpha Sigma Phi. Past recipients include the following: 2001, Warren Buffett, Berkshire Hathaway; 1995, Mr. John Kasich, Representative from Ohio, Principle Architect, National Budget Reductions; 1993, Dr. C. Everett Koop, Surgeon General of the United States; 1987, and Dr. William B. Hutchinson, Founding Director and President, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center; 1975. Furthermore, Dr. Wells has received the Distinguished Achievement Citation from the Ohio Wesleyan University Alumni Association. Other recipients include Norman Vincent Peale, Branch Rickey, and Nobel Laureate F. Sherwood Rowland.

In 1989, Dr. Wells organized a consortium of prestigious biomedical scientists to advise Senator Mark Hatfield and Admiral James D. Watkins (Secretary, Department of Energy) on education policies which resulted in the Bill (S.2114) entitled, "Excellence in Mathematics, Science, and Engineering Act of 1990." He has also served as an advisor to the White House on health care reform and Mr. Daniel Goldin (Director, National Aeronautics and Space Administration). He served on the Scientific Advisory Council of the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (Dr. Kenneth Olden, Director) (1999-2001).

Dr. Wells was elected the President (2000-2002) of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (Bethesda, Maryland). In addition, he was the President (2003-04) of the

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) (Bethesda, MD) which is comprised of 84,000 members from 22 biomedical research societies.