

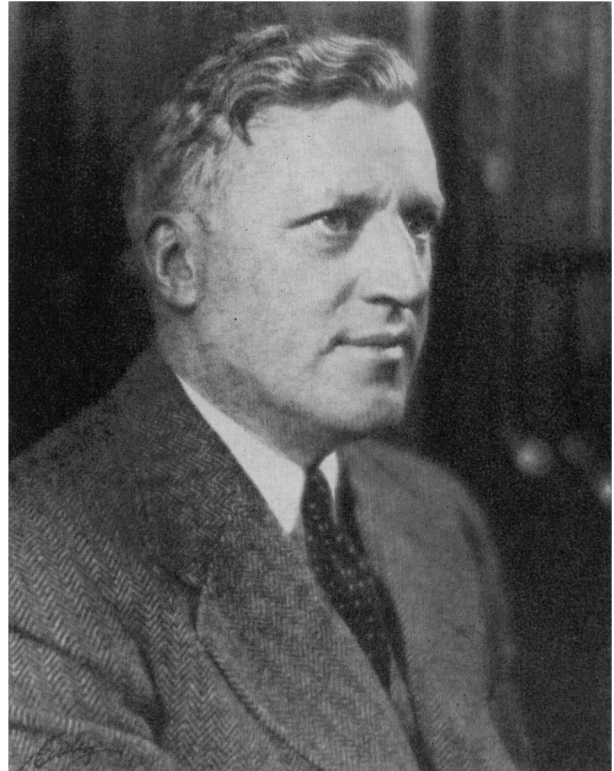
Russell Morse Wilder, Sr.

1885-1959

Randall G. Sprague, M.D., Rochester, Minnesota

Dr. Russell Morse Wilder, Sr., died in Rochester, Minnesota, on Dec. 16, 1959, at the age of seventy-four years. He played an important role in the development of the American Diabetes Association and served as its president in 1947. During his professional career he became a figure of international distinction in the field of diabetes, and was widely known for his contributions to nutrition and metabolism. At the time of his death he was an emeritus member of the medical staff of the Mayo Clinic and emeritus Professor of Medicine in the Mayo Foundation, Graduate School, University of Minnesota.

Dr. Wilder was born on Nov. 24, 1885, in Cincinnati, Ohio. In his family were several distinguished physicians and authors, and his two sons who survive him are physicians. In 1907 he was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science from the University of Chicago, where the scholarly attributes which were conspicuous in his later professional life were fostered. His college work included a year of study in Heidelberg, Germany. In 1910, while he was a medical student at the University of Chicago, he went to Mexico with Dr. Howard Taylor Ricketts to study typhus fever. Ricketts died of this disease in that year, but Dr. Wilder, with characteristic energy and curiosity, returned to Mexico to carry on the studies Ricketts had initiated. He received the degrees of Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Philosophy magna cum laude from the University of Chicago in 1912. For standing first in his class he was awarded the Benjamin Rush Gold Medal. In 1914 he studied in Vienna for eight months, principally at the First Medical Clinic under Müller-Deham, who had been one of von Noorden's assistants. There a beginning interest in diabetes grew and found active expression. Upon his return from Vienna he became resident physician in the Presbyterian Hospital of Chicago. This was the first residency to be created in a hospital west of the eastern seaboard. One of the things which attracted Dr. Wilder to the post was the availability of research facilities at the Otho S. A. Sprague Memorial Institute of Rush Medical College of the University of Chicago. With Dr. Rollin T. Woodyatt he investigated the rate of utilization of glucose and ketone acids in dogs, and developed further his interest in clinical and experimental diabetes. These



studies were interrupted by service in the Medical Corps of the Army in the First World War. He left the army in 1919 with the grade of captain and with a citation by the commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces for "exceptionally meritorious and conspicuous service."

In 1919 he became a member of the staff of the Division of Medicine of the Mayo Clinic and Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Mayo Foundation. By then his interest in diabetes was well established and he was placed in charge of all diabetic patients, who, at the time, numbered about 100 a year. In later years the annual number exceeded 2,500. He was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor of Medicine in the Mayo Foundation in 1922.

At the Mayo Clinic he investigated various clinical problems in the field of metabolism and nutrition. He long will be remembered as one of the pioneers in the clinical use of insulin after its discovery by Banting

and Best in 1921. Among his other early contributions was a demonstration of the effectiveness of a ketogenic diet in the treatment of epilepsy. In 1927, with Allan, Power and Robertson, he described the first recorded case in which organic hyperinsulinism was caused by a carcinoma of pancreatic islet tissue with spontaneous production of excessive amounts of insulin.

A considerable number of physicians can trace their interest in diabetes to the inspiration of Dr. Wilder. Over the years he suggested many research problems in the field of metabolism, particularly diabetes, to his graduate students, and he became known for his generosity in giving credit to them and to other collaborators in clinical and laboratory investigation.

In 1929 Dr. Wilder became Professor of Medicine and chairman of the Department of Medicine at the University of Chicago. In addition to clinical practice and teaching he worked there on osteitis fibrosa cystica, obesity, Addison's disease and epilepsy. In 1931 he returned to the Mayo Clinic and became Professor of Medicine in the Mayo Foundation and head of the Department of Medicine of the Mayo Foundation. In the years to follow, with his colleagues and students, he pursued a variety of studies related to diabetes, nutrition and endocrine and metabolic diseases. Among his contributions were studies of the action and clinical use of protamine insulin, introduced in 1936 by Hagedorn, and the demonstration that the course of Addison's disease could be favorably influenced by restriction of the intake of potassium.

He retired from the Mayo Clinic and Mayo Foundation in 1950, and then became the first director of the new National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, where he played a leading role in the development of its resources and activities in the fields of research, support of research and training of specialists in rheumatic and metabolic diseases. The current interest of the Institute in diabetes can be traced in part to his influence. He was a leader in the formulation of the policies and program of the new Clinical Center of the National Institutes of Health at Bethesda, Maryland. Because of ill health he retired as director of the Institute in 1953, and returned to Rochester, Minnesota.

Other activities with the Federal government, particularly during and after the Second World War, added further luster to a career that was already distinguished. He was a member of the Committee on Medicine of the National Research Council from 1940 to 1946, and chairman of that committee in 1940. In 1941 he organized and became chairman of the

Food and Nutrition Board on which he served until 1947. In 1943 he was chief of the Civilian Food Requirements Branch of the War Food Administration.

Dr. Wilder occupied many other positions of honor and high responsibility. In 1931 he was appointed a member of the Council on Foods and Nutrition of the American Medical Association, and he served on the council for many years. He was president of the National Vitamin Foundation in 1956. The American Diabetes Association conferred the Banting Medal upon him in 1947, when he was president of the Association. The University of Chicago honored him with the Distinguished Service Medal in 1941 and the Howard Taylor Ricketts Award in 1949. The Medical Alumni Association of the University of Chicago presented him with the honorary gold key in 1955. The American Medical Association gave him the Joseph Goldberger Award in 1954 for his contributions to the field of nutrition, and in 1956 the American Bakers' Association gave him an award in recognition of his leadership in promoting enrichment of white flour and bread with vitamins. He was made a master of the American College of Physicians in 1957 and an honorary member of the American Dietetic Association in 1959.

As a by-product of his many activities in clinical and research medicine he became a notable figure in the field of medical writing, serving at various times on the editorial board of the *Journal of Nutrition* and the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, the editorial committee of *Nutrition Reviews* and as an associate editor of *Public Health Reports*. He contributed more than 250 papers to medical and scientific journals, and was a contributor to several textbooks of medicine and to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He was the author of *A Primer for Diabetic Patients*, published in 1921, with eight subsequent editions; and *Clinical Diabetes Mellitus and Hyperinsulinism*, published in 1940.

Dr. Wilder was loved as a man by those who had the privilege of contact with him. He occupied a position of eminence and respect as physician and investigator. During his career he cared for thousands of diabetic patients, combining devotion, scientific knowledge and warm compassion with firm guidance and sound teaching. He was a kindly gentleman of dignity and personal charm who enriched the lives of his friends, patients and professional associates and the large area of medical science which his career embraced. He is survived by his wife, Lucy Beeler Wilder, and two sons, Dr. Russell Morse Wilder, Jr., and Dr. Thomas Carroll Wilder.