

## Impact

*“A nation that does not honor its heroes does not long endure”*

—Abraham Lincoln

The editorial board of *Fertility and Sterility* in 1950 was composed of a distinguished group of leaders in the field. Briefly described are selected members' contributions to the field of reproductive endocrinology and infertility. What was their impact on reproductive medicine today?

- Pendleton Tompkins, M.D.—A University of Pennsylvania resident and practitioner in California, he remained an intellectual force in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. In 1944, he published on ovulation and body temperature, which helped make basal body temperature charts part of standard reproductive practice. His most well-known legacy is the development of the Tompkins procedure for treatment of the septate uterus. The Tompkins procedure was the standard approach for repair until 1983, when the first attempts at hysteroscopic metroplasty were performed. He was the founding editor of *Fertility and Sterility*.
- Alan F. Guttmacher, M.D.—A proponent for contraception, he founded the Center for Family Planning Program Development in 1968, which was later renamed the Guttmacher Institute and still exists today. Under his encouragement, the American Society for the Study of Sterility made its first public policy pronouncement, support of donor insemination, in 1955. He became the president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 1962, where he remained until his death in 1974.
- Robert S. Hotchkiss, M.D.—A pioneer in male fertility and the 18th president of the American Fertility Society, he authored the book *Fertility in Men*. During his presidency, in 1965, the Society voted to change its name from the American Society for the Study of Sterility (ASSS) to the American Fertility Society (AFS).
- John MacLeod, Ph.D.—The first non-M.D. to join the Society, he quantified the numerical constituents of the sperm count and described both the 20 million sperm per high-powered field cut-off for oligospermia and the inverse relationship of sperm count and time to pregnancy. His research in the physiology of human fertility was recognized with the Lasker Award in 1945. By 1985, his article “Seminal Cytology in the Presence of Varicocele,” published in 1965, had been cited 166 times. In addition, he authored or co-authored five of the 58 most-cited articles from *Fertility and Sterility* between 1955 and 1985.
- Joe V. Meigs, M.D.—His role as a gynecologic oncologist makes his presence on the editorial board of *Fertility and Sterility* particularly interesting. He was a famous Massachusetts General Hospital professor noted for describing Meigs syndrome: a triad of ovarian fibroma, ascites, and pleural effusion. It was described by Meigs and named by Rhodes and Terrell in 1937.
- George N. Papanicolaou, M.D.—Best known for being the inventor of the Papanicolaou (Pap) smear, he first reported, in 1928, that vaginal smears could detect malignant cells. It was not until 1943, when he and Dr. Herbert Traut published “Diagnosis of Uterine Cancer by the Vaginal Smear,” that the Pap smear began to be used for cervical cancer screening. Membership in the early years of the Society was particularly restrictive, and he was designated as the sole honorary member at the June 1944 meeting.
- Abraham E. Rakoff, M.D.—A Philadelphia medical endocrinologist who was, by many estimates, the father of reproductive endocrinology. As an internist, he pioneered ovulation induction with clomiphene citrate. His research included cytology and staining techniques, and he used these new techniques in the study of gynecologic endocrinology. Such research provided insights into the effect of estrogen on cervical cytology.
- John Rock, M.D.—Known as “the Father of the Pill,” he was still dedicated to the treatment of infertility. In 1944, he and Dr. Miriam Menkin achieved the first in vitro fertilization of a human ovum. In 1954, he recognized the severe lack of funding for fertility research and urged money be diverted from the H-bomb development to fund such research. The first oral contraceptive pill was approved for the treatment of menstrual disorders in 1957 and for contraception in May 1960.
- I.C. Rubin, M.D.—Renowned gynecologist in New York and pioneer in the treatment of infertility. He is most famous for developing the Rubin test, a test whereby air was injected into the uterus to check for tubal patency. With a stethoscope, one could hear the air exit the tubes as bubbles. Eventually, using X-ray, he demonstrated free air under the diaphragm when at least one tube was patent. It is clear that it had a major impact on the field. His first experiments were performed with oxygen in 1919, but he later switched to carbon dioxide for comfort and safety reasons.
- Abraham Stone, M.D.—Founded the *Journal of Human Fertility*, thought to be the progenitor of *Fertility and Sterility*, and served as Editor from 1936 to 1943. He was responsible for first suggesting that the Society change its name from “ASSS” to The American Fertility Society (AFS) in 1957. He was involved in the early birth-control movement with Margaret Sanger and, in 1941, became the director of the Margaret Sanger Research Bureau in New York.
- Walter W. Williams, M.D.—The founding father of the American Society for the Study of Sterility in March 1944 after stating “the clinical handling of the sterility problem by the profession is far from what it should be.” Although the first few months were rocky, the first meeting was held in Chicago in June 1944. His career began in veterinary medicine, where he performed pioneering research on disorders of sperm in breeding cattle. He also stressed the importance of performing a comprehensive examination of both partners in couples with infertility. He served as the Society's President from 1944 to 1946 and as its first Secretary—Treasurer from 1947 to 1952.

In the inaugural issue of *Fertility and Sterility*, two landmark articles were published:

“Dating the Endometrial Biopsy” by Noyes, Hertig, and Rock (also mentioned in the table of contents) is the most quoted paper in our field. It discusses characteristics of proliferative endometrium and secretory endometrium. This paper was cited 589 times from 1955 to 1985, more than twice the number of citations of the second most cited article.

“The Thermogenic Property of Progesterone” by S. Leon Israel. Israel was a leader in the field for many years. He was a distinguished Editor of the Green Journal and practiced at Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. A great intellectual leader for many years, he was a proponent of emphasizing both laboratory and clinical research.

Their legacies and insights included reproductive surgery, contraception including “the Pill,” quantitating the sperm count and male infertility, ovulation induction, and reproductive endocrinology, to highlight a few.

Which of these leaders had the greatest impact? What will your impact be?

In David Brooks’s book “The Road to Character” he describes people having CVs, (what they did) and Eulogies (what people thought of them). This should be a part of your analysis.

Everyone has an impact, best summed up by a quote from Maya Angelou:

“PEOPLE WILL FORGET  
WHAT YOU SAID,  
PEOPLE WILL FORGET  
WHAT YOU DID,  
BUT PEOPLE WILL  
NEVER FORGET HOW  
YOU MADE THEM FEEL”

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