

David Grob; Medical Research Pioneer

By Delthia Ricks
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David Grob, a pioneer in the study and treatment of neuromuscular disorders who helped develop an effective therapy for the rare condition known as myasthenia gravis, has died. He was 89.

Dr. Grob died March 23, the result of a lingering infection caused by contaminated medical equipment at a Long Island hospital.

"He took it in stride," said Grob's eldest son, Charles Grob, a psychiatrist living in Irvine, Calif. "He understood hospitals and realized that this is one of the risks you take just living in this world."

In the late 1940s, myasthenia gravis, typified by progressive and insidious muscle weakness, was a mystifying condition.

Patients cannot easily control their eyelids and have trouble chewing, talking, swallowing and breathing.

While on staff at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Dr. Grob discovered that the condition is caused by faulty communication between nerves and muscles.

In 1948, he and his colleagues determined that the use of cholinesterase, a biochemical, allows nerves and muscles to "talk" to each other.

Largely because of Dr. Grob's work, doctors recognize myasthenia gravis as both a neuromuscular condition and an autoimmune disease, a condition in which the body's own turncoat constituents launch the attack.

Stuart Fischer, one of Dr. Grob's medical students in the 1970s at Maimonides Medical Center in New York, said his teacher left a lasting impression.

"He was an internationally renowned expert in myasthenia gravis as well as a professor with impeccable academic credentials," Fischer said. "To me, however, he was simply the most inspiring healer and teacher of a lifetime."

From 1958 to 1989, Dr. Grob chaired the department of medicine at Maimonides, and from 1989 to 2006 he was medical director of the Maimonides Research Foundation.

"Last month, his final paper was published," Charles Grob said, referring to a study in the journal *Muscle and Nerve*. "He basically analyzed the clinical data of 2,000 patients he had personally seen over 60 years. It was a very unusual data set.

"But my dad being my dad, he put other people's names on the paper."

Dr. Grob was born Feb. 23, 1919, in New York City. He was so precocious that he finished high school at the age of 14 and graduated from the City College of New York at 18.

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The advertisement is a vertical banner with a light blue background. At the top, it says "Advertisement" in small blue text. Below that is a graphic of a calendar page with the number "2" in a large white font on an orange background, and the text "DAYS LEFT" underneath. To the right of this is a logo that says "DAYS OF DEALS" in bold black letters. The main text of the ad is "RAKE UP 10 DAYS OF AMAZING DEALS" in large, bold, red letters, with a graphic of a rake and falling autumn leaves. At the bottom left is the Intel logo with "Core 2 Duo" and "Do More" text. At the bottom right is a red "SHOP NOW" button with a white arrow, and the Dell logo with the tagline "YOUR IS HERE".

He received his medical degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1942.

Charles Grob said his father served in World War II and was awarded a Bronze Star. "He volunteered to be a battalion surgeon," the son said.

Dr. Grob was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth, in 1998.

In addition to his son Charles, he is survived by another son, Phillip Grob of Cazadero, Calif.; two daughters Susan Lichtenfeld of Chicago and Emily Hochberg of Long Island; and four grandchildren.

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