

Andrew Bassett, Orthopedist, Is Dead at 70

C. Andrew L. Bassett, professor emeritus of orthopedic surgery, died Nov. 17 at his home in Bronxville, N.Y. He was 70. The cause of death was a brain tumor.

He had been on the Columbia faculty and on the staff at Presbyterian Hospital since 1955, and from 1957 to 1986 he headed the Orthopedic Research Laboratories. He was named professor emeritus in 1984. He had also been a long-time consultant to Helen Hayes (New York State Rehabilitation) Hospital in West Haverstraw, N.Y. He was the founder of Electro-Biology Inc. of Parsipany, N.J., a company which marketed devices to stimulate bone growth in fractures which refuse to heal. He also founded Osteodyne Inc. in Research Triangle Park, N.C., and was its chairman until he resigned last month.

Bassett is best known for his work in electromagnetics that led to the faster healing of broken bones.

In 1978 he reported that pulsing electromagnetic fields could be used to repair fractured limbs. His work, the result of 20 years of investigation and a five-year study of outpatients, was based on the discovery that cell functions could be controlled by external electromagnetic fields. It is estimated that his electromagnetic technique has been used on more than 100,000 patients nationwide to heal broken bones that otherwise would have required surgery.

His work had widespread application, including his development, along with Arthur A. Pilla of the Bi-Osteogen, of a shin-guard-shaped device that was used to heal injured thoroughbreds.

He was honored by many groups, including United Cerebral Palsy, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Alpha Omega Alpha and orthopedic societies worldwide.

Throughout his career he was a consultant to the government and also served on many national committees to evaluate bone-graft, medical devices, surgical implants and other innovative procedures.

He was awarded an honorary degree from S.U.N.Y., the Joseph Mather Smith Prize from Columbia, and the Galvani Award and Medal from the University of Bologna. He was a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Bassett was born on Aug. 4, 1924 in Crisfield, Md. He attended Princeton as an undergraduate, and underwent pre-medical training at Washington and Lee University and City College.

In 1944 he enrolled at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons, where he graduated in 1948, and followed with a residency at St. Luke's.

After doing research at Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown, N.Y. and New York Orthopaedic Hospital, he was appointed assistant attending orthopaedic surgeon at Columbia-Presbyterian in 1955.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Nancy Clark Bassett; a daughter, Susan Wilson of San Francisco; two sons, David C. of Branford, Conn., and Less S. of Suasalito, Calif., a brother, Govert L. of Raleigh, N.C., and three grandchildren.

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