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Dr. Paul B. Sigler, 65, Scientist Who Studied Organic Structure

By WOLFGANG SAXON JAN. 15, 2000

Dr. Paul Benjamin Sigler, a molecular biologist at Yale and a pioneer in the study of the organic structure of organisms, collapsed and died on Tuesday on a walk from his home to his laboratory on the campus in New Haven. He was 65.

The cause was a heart attack, the university reported.

Dr. Sigler, who also conducted research at Yale with support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, contributed to the understanding of cell development, hormone regulation and cancerous growths. His basic research in structural biology concerned changes and aberrations in the number or arrangement of chromosomes in animals or plants.

Dr. Sigler came to the field in a roundabout way. A native of Richmond, Va., he graduated summa cum laude from Princeton with a degree in chemistry in 1955 and prepared for a medical career.

He trained at Columbia University, where he received an M.D. in 1959. After his internship and residency at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, he turned to basic research and received a doctorate in biochemistry at Cambridge, in England, in 1968.

By then he had joined the handful of biophysicists who employed crystallography to plumb the secrets of enzyme function by charting the structure of proteins. After a brief stint at the National Institutes of Health, he worked at the

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In 1967, he moved to the University of Chicago, where he rose to the rank of professor of biochemistry and molecular biology. There, he determined the structure of the RNA molecule, which initiates protein synthesis. He also began his studies of proteins that regulate the flow of information encoded in genes. He continued that work at Yale, where he arrived in 1989.

in 1992, he was selected for the National Academy of Sciences, which advises the federal government.

Dr. Sigler is survived by his wife of 41 years, Althea Jo Martin Sigler; four daughters, Jennifer L. Sigler of Port Jefferson, N.Y., Michelle A. Sigler of London, Deborah R. Sigler of Berkeley, Calif., and Rebecca L. Africano of Normal, Ill.; a son, Jonathan L., of Jerusalem; a brother, Miles, of Philadelphia, and eight grandchildren.

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