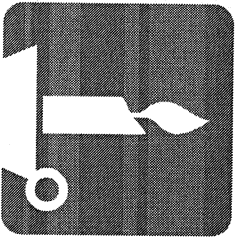


# **Erwin Roy John, Ph.D.**

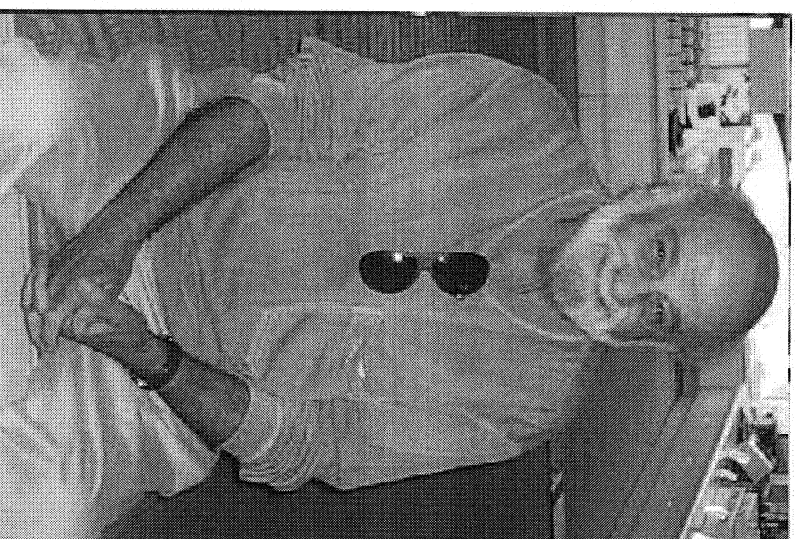
*World Renowned Neuroscientist*



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*August 14, 1924 - February 28, 2009*

Erwin Roy John was born August 14, 1924, in Brownsville, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Long Beach, Long Island. He was the only son of Siegfried John, of Vienna, and Jozsefina Kroh, of Beregsasz, Hungary, who settled in the U.S. after being interned as enemy aliens when World War One broke out as they were visiting on their honeymoon. After a venture as a pool hall owner, Siegfried John set up an import business that went bust during the Depression. The family used unsold caviar as a topping for the potatoes they bought from the weekly relief check. Roy's experiences in the Depression, including work in an airplane plant where he served as a volunteer union organizer, contributed to a lifelong sympathy with leftist causes.

After a stint at City College of New York, he worked machining plutonium for a program which was later revealed to have been part the Manhattan Project. Volunteering to serve in the armed forces, he fought in the Battle of the Bulge and the invasion of Germany as a member of the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. At war's end, he discovered that 27 members of his mother's family had been killed in Auschwitz; no trace was found of his father's family, whose barge transport business on the Danube had been seized by the Nazis.

Taking advantage of the GI Bill, he gained a degree in Physics and a Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Chicago, while working as a cab driver and founding a campus group to resist McCarthyism. After working in brain research at the University of California at Los Angeles, he established the Center for Brain Research at the University of Rochester. In 1963, he moved to New York City, directing the brain research laboratory at Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital. During this period he also became intensely involved in the movement against the Vietnam War, and began a series of visits to Cuba, where he is regarded as the "grandfather of Cuban neuroscience." Files he obtained through the Freedom of Information Act gave credence to charges that he had been blacklisted from a range of professional activities and grants due to his left-of-center views.

In 1974, Dr. John founded the Brain Research Laboratories at the New York University School of Medicine, serving as Director for over three decades as well as Professor of Medicine. He was also a Research Scientist at the Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research of New York State. He was a world-renowned pioneer in the field of computerized quantitative neurophysiology (Neurometrics), co-discoverer of the P300 cognitive evoked potential, a leader in the understanding of consciousness and mentor to a generation of

neuroscientists around the world. His research also involved long-term collaborations with scientific leaders in countries including Cuba, Denmark, France, Germany, Mexico, Switzerland and Turkey.

Dr. John was committed to translating his discoveries in basic neuroscience into clinical practice, leading to improved treatment of neurocognitive and psychiatric disorders. His work led to more than 25 patents in medical technology, implemented through continuous collaborations with industry. His intense concern for patients' suffering from functional brain abnormalities, not evident through conventional neuro-imaging, has led to a family of devices with wide applicability, including the diagnosis and treatment of blast concussion and PTSD. Medical instruments based upon Neurometric technology can also be found in anesthesiology, psychiatry and neurology, helping provide treatments for coma, learning disabilities and autism. During coronary bypass surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital in 1992, his life was saved by use of one of his brain monitoring instruments, which led the anesthesiologist to modify his procedures so that sufficient brain oxygenation was maintained.

Dr. John published more than 200 articles in peer-reviewed journals, books and book chapters. His 1967 textbook, *Mechanism of Memory*, is still considered a classic in the field. When it appeared, the predominant, "localizationist" view of brain function held that memories were held in particular neurons or groups of neurons. Dr. John's then-heterodox model uses deviations from a ground state as evidence that distributed networks are fundamental to consciousness, memory and functional brain disorders. A later article, using an animal model, presented overwhelming evidence that memory is distributed throughout the entire brain. In 2006, the cover of the journal *Anesthesiology* showed a figure from an article that achieved worldwide recognition as the first new model of loss-of-consciousness which had been published by them in the last 40 years.

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Dr. John is survived by his wife and colleague Leslie Pritchep-John; His children Sarah A. John, Sheila P. Fischer, S. Sandor John, Martha S. John, M. Sasha John, David J. John and Joshua Turner; His eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren.