

Lauditio: R Adams Cowley, MD

Peter Safar, M.D.[†]



R Adams Cowley

In 1989, the R Adams Cowley, MD, Shock-Trauma Center was dedicated in Baltimore, Maryland. This building houses the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), Dr. Cowley's principal creation. For the past 26 years, MIEMSS has been an internationally recognized, leading institution in the provision of and training in trauma care and emergency medical services (EMS). We take this occasion to honor R Adams Cowley, our colleague and friend.

Dr. Cowley was born in Layton, Utah, where he spent his childhood. In 1944, he received his M.D. degree from the University of Maryland in Baltimore. He trained in surgery at the University of Maryland and in thoracic surgery at the University of Michigan. In the late 1940s,

he served with the United States armed forces in Europe. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, while based at the University of Maryland, he rose to prominence as one of the world's leading thoracic and traumatologic surgeons.

In 1960, Dr. Cowley became the initiating director of the Clinical Shock-Trauma Unit at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and a full professor soon thereafter. As an imaginative initiator of new programs, in 1973, with the support of the governor of Maryland, he expanded the Trauma Research Center into the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medicine and the Division of Emergency Medical Services, which since 1977 has been the MIEMSS. Dr. Cowley recruited numerous talented individuals to work with him to make the MIEMSS an international model for a major trauma center. He retired as its director in 1989.

Dr. Cowley's local, state, national, and international leadership roles, honors, and society memberships are too numerous to list on these few pages. His 429 publications include such classics as his book on the pathophysiology of shock.¹ His untiring, catalyzing role, in part reflected in nine books, 26 audiovisual productions, and 18 white papers and technical reports, answered the call for action on Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society, which Dr. Cowley helped formulate.² This document was prepared in the 1960s by our mutual friend, Dr. Sam Seeley, the leader of the national standard-setting committees of the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council (NAS-NRC), concerning resuscitation and EMS, on which Dr. Cowley and I

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*The Charles McC. Mathias, Jr., National Study Center for Trauma and Emergency Medical Systems is housed in the original University of Maryland, Clinical Shock Trauma Unit at 122 South Greene Street in Baltimore, Maryland (21201-1595), USA.

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served. Without Dr. Cowley's extraordinary dedication, goal-orientation, forcefulness, directness, and honest leadership, our nation might still look away from this neglected disease. Directly or indirectly, his life's contributions will benefit victims of trauma for generations to come.

In 1986, Dr. Cowley founded the Charles McC. Mathias, Jr., National Study Center for Trauma and Emergency Medical Systems.* This study center, designated as such by former President Ronald Reagan and the United States Congress, is a clearinghouse for EMS information.

On a personal note, I must reflect on our positive communications over three decades, starting during my time at Baltimore City Hospital from 1955 to 1961. In the mid-1980s, after initiation of the journal for the Club of Mainz (now the World Association for Emergency and Disaster Medicine [WAEDM]), I asked Dr. Cowley to be its second editor (In 1989, the journal was renamed *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*). Through him, the journal drew traumatologic surgeons into this fraternity which was initiated mostly by anesthesiologists. Dr. Cowley has been a positive force in establishing collegial interactions between trauma surgeons, anesthesiologists, emergency physicians, and critical care physicians. An individualist himself, he respects individualism, not unions.

Although based in Baltimore, his programs have had many spin-off effects elsewhere. For example, one of my former medical student research fellows, who became a resident in surgery at the University of Pittsburgh, is becoming a traumatologist, motivated in part by his rotation through the MIEMSS and three years of research fellowship at our International Resuscitation Research Center (IRRC) of the University of Pittsburgh. Another example is the newly formed international movement of anesthesiologists interested in traumatology (International Trauma Anesthesia and Critical Care Society [ITACCS]), which has been initiated by disciples of Dr. Cowley. We are fortunate in having had collegial interactions with Dr. Cowley in the 1980s when he attended the WAEDM congresses in Brighton, United Kingdom, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where his group made important presentations on helicopter transport, evaluation, resuscitability of polytrauma victims, and response to multi-casualty incidents in the Baltimore area.

The members of the WAEDM and many others hereby wish the MIEMSS and its programs, created by Dr. Cowley, continued growth and success. Change means chance for progress. Undoubtedly, those who are taking over the reins will push for increasingly higher standards, building on what Dr. Cowley has created. Thanks and congratulations to our colleague and friend, R A. Cowley.

References

1. Cowley RA, Trump BF [Eds] *Pathophysiology of Shock, Anoxia, and Ischemia*. Baltimore:Williams & Wilkins, 1981.
2. Seeley S: *Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society*. Committee on Trauma and Committee on Shock, Division of Medical Sciences, 1966. National Academy of Sciences [NAS], National Research Council [NRC], 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C., 20418 USA.