

Between discoveries in the pure sciences and such eventual applications as they come to have clinically lies an enormous area of physiological and pharmacological research of literally vital importance -- that of the translation of increases in biological knowledge to the enhancement of the health care of our people. In this area Robert Furchgott is, as honorary degrees from as far away as Madrid and Lund testify, recognized as one of the world's preeminent figures.

A native South Carolinian, he took a B.S. degree in chemistry here in 1937 and three years later a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Northwestern. His career paths are quickly traced: nine years at the Cornell University Medical College, seven at the Washington University School of Medicine, and over thirty at the Downstate Medical Center of the State University of New York -- twenty-six of them as chairman of the department of Pharmacology, a record that suggests both superior academic statesmanship and a singular capacity to endure.

Informing this stable career pattern are contributions to medical research far-reaching in their excitement and importance. Prominent among these are his work in receptor theory and its applications, of which a direct result was the concept of "spare receptors," now central to all interpretations of cell communication throughout biology; and his findings about the way smooth vascular muscles relax, with far-reaching consequences for the development of anti-anginal drugs and agents for hypertension therapy. These studies, characterized by his careful yet innovative style, have made possible marked advances in the treatment of muscles altered by disease.

Standing as we are not many yards from a Health Affairs complex of five professional schools, members of all of which may have occasion to use Robert Furchgott's work, we find a particularly appropriate pleasure in awarding to this preeminent scientific researcher our degree of Doctor of Science.