Frederick William Twort Encyclopedia Article

Frederick William Twort

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Frederick William Twort

1877-1950

English microbiologist and bacteriologist who discovered a virus that attacked bacteria, later known as bacteriophages. While the superintendent of a veterinary dispensary in London, Twort isolated himself and engaged in solitary research for 35 years, interrupted only by World War I. Little recognized in his life, he discovered bacteriophages while studying cultures of *Staphylococcus aureus* (a bacterium responsible for boils), and in a 1907 paper established the idea of mutation and adaptation of bacteria. He also did pioneering work on the nutritional needs of bacteria. In 1944 his laboratory was destroyed by wartime bombing.