Paul Maurice Zoll Encyclopedia Article

Paul Maurice Zoll

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Paul Maurice Zoll

1911-1999

American Cardiologist

Paul M. Zoll introduced the first cardiac pacemaker in 1952. He was also a pioneer in the use of heart monitors, which he introduced in 1955, and of external countershock defibrillators, which he first used in 1956.

Zoll was born in Boston on July 15, 1911, to Hyman and Molly Homsky Zoll. He earned his B.A. from Harvard, graduating summa cum laude in 1932, and went on to earn his M.D. at Harvard Medical School in 1936. Zoll performed his internship at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, and later at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, from 1936 to 1939.

Zoll then began his medical practice in Boston, specializing in cardiology. He also began working as a medical researcher at Beth Israel Hospital, where he became assistant in medicine in 1947. During World War II, Zoll served in the U.S. Army, joining in 1941 as a first lieutenant and ending his term of service in 1945 as a major. During that time, he received the Legion of Merit medal.

At Beth Israel, Zoll conducted his ground-breaking work with heart machines. After showing for the first time that electrical stimulation can revive a heart that has stopped beating, he went on to conduct research that led to the creation of the first pacemaker in 1952. He was also instrumental in the development of electronic heart monitors in 1955, and of external countershock defibrillators, which are capable of restarting a heart through electrical stimulation, in 1956.

Zoll also worked as a medical researcher at Harvard Medical School from 1939, and as a research fellow in medicine from 1941. He was a consultant in cardiology to Boston hospitals, associate editor of *Circulation* (1956-65), and contributor of articles to other medical journals. He received a number of honors, most notably the Albert Lasker award for clinical medical research in 1973. Zoll also belonged to a number of professional organizations, among them the American Heart Association, which gave him its award of merit in 1974 and 1992.

Married twice, to Janet F. Jones in 1939, and to Ann Blumgart Gurewich in 1981, Zoll had two children, Ross and Mary Janet. He retired in 1994, and died of respiratory arrest in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, on January 5, 1999.