

Duncan Clark Awardee

Milton I. Roemer, MD, MA

1995

Dr. Milton I. Roemer (1917-2001) joined the UCLA faculty in 1962, teaching health administration. Earlier he held various health administration posts with the United States Public Health Service, the World Health Organization in Geneva and the Saskatchewan Department of Public Health. He also taught at Yale and elsewhere. He retired in 1986 as a professor in the UCLA School of Public Health's Department of Health Services.



Dr. Roemer advocated the creation of a national health program that involved government. In the 1970's when there were only a few health maintenance organizations in the United States, he was a supporter of HMOs, and he has been credited with encouraging their development.

He was also known for what is called the "Roemer effect" or "Roemer's law". While working at the UCLA School of Public Health, Roemer and colleagues found a positive correlation between the number of short-term general hospital beds available per 1,000 population and the number of hospital days used per 1,000 population.

Dr. Roemer compared medicine and health care systems in many countries, producing a two-volume work, "National Health Systems of the World" (1991 and 1993, Oxford University Press). He criticized another aspect of health care in the United States in a paper he presented in 1978 at a meeting of the American Public Health Association. Noting that Los Angeles County had had a substantial drop in its death rate in early 1976 when numerous doctors there had withheld services to protest higher malpractice insurance premiums, he tied the decrease to a sharp drop in elective surgery and said there was mounting evidence that a decrease in elective surgery might improve life expectancy.

He was the sole author of 20 books and a co-author of 12. A native of Paterson, N.J., he earned a bachelor's degree in public health from the University of Michigan, a master's degree in sociology from Cornell and his medical degree from New York University.