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Paul Ehrlich's career in many ways epitomizes the ideals and successes of the Rockefeller University. Fundamental advances in basic biology, microbiology, cytochemistry and immunology are instrumental in achieving the most important benefits to human health. The practitioner may afford direct benefit to thousands of grateful patients. The medical scientist provides the new tools used by the practitioner, and enhances the welfare of millions, but often remains unknown to the public at large.

Ehrlich's contributions cut across so many fields that it would be difficult to summarize them. He was responsible for many specific stains that empowered microscopy of tissue cells and parasites. That specificity inspired his development of the concepts of receptors and ligands which underlie the most important progress in cellular biology and medicine today. Likewise, he developed the first synthetic chemotherapeutic agents, and applied them to common and to exotic diseases, including parasites that have subsequently been neglected to our shame. Applying concepts of cell surface receptors to cellular immunology, he laid the groundwork of contemporary theory in that field.

Ehrlich's career was intertwined with that of the Rockefeller University in many other more personal ways. His own research was a paradigm for the planning of the original institute. Conversely he was an early recipient of a research grant-in-aid, and an avid collaborator during the Institute's earliest days. In Germany, he was hampered, but obviously not broken, by the anti-semitism that prevailed in medical academic circles. That stain was not unknown in the U.S. at that time. It is one of the great virtues of our founders that ethnic discrimination was notably lacking at our own Institute -- witness a constellation that included names like Simon Flexner, Jacques Loeb and Hideyo Noguchi.

Very little of the research now going on at The Rockefeller has not been significantly rooted in Paul Ehrlich's concrete scientific accomplishments. All of it embodies the same ideals, and we can be proud of this opportunity to celebrate that tradition.