

Pioneering molecular biologist Roy J. Britten dies

February 22 2012



In this undated photo courtesy of the California Institute of Technology showing Roy J. Britten, a pioneering molecular biologist who discovered the crucial fact that humans and animals have multiple copies of some DNA segments and discovered the repetitive DNA sequence has died of pancreatic cancer on Jan. 21 at his Costa Mesa home. He was 92. (AP Photo/California Institute of Technology)

(AP) -- Roy J. Britten, a pioneering molecular biologist who discovered the crucial fact that humans and animals have multiple copies of some DNA segments, has died. He was 92.

The California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, where Britten performed research for decades, said Wednesday that Britten died of

pancreatic cancer on Jan. 21 at his Costa Mesa home.

Britten discovered the [repetitive DNA sequences](#) in 1968. The sequences don't provide blueprints for genes but they are critical for animal development.

Britten and colleague Eric Davidson also helped demonstrate that gene expression - the way certain genes are switched on - during development plays a crucial evolutionary role, such as determining whether an animal has legs or fins. That work laid the foundation for the field of [evolutionary biology](#).

©2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Pioneering molecular biologist Roy J. Britten dies (2012, February 22) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-02-molecular-biologist-roy-britten-dies.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.