

Sydney Brenner, who helped decipher genetic code, dies at 92

April 7 2019



In this Oct. 8, 2002, file photo, Sydney Brenner, a professor in the Molecular Sciences Institute in Berkeley, Calif., gestures during a press conference in Munich, Germany. Brenner, a Nobel Prize-winning biologist who helped decipher the genetic code and whose research on a roundworm laid the groundwork for decades of human disease research, has died. The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in California said Brenner died Friday, April 5, 2019 in Singapore. He was 92. (AP Photo/Jan Pitman, File)

Sydney Brenner, a Nobel Prize-winning biologist who helped decipher the genetic code and whose research on a roundworm sparked a new field of human disease research, has died. He was 92.

The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in California, where Brenner spent part of his seven-decade career, said he died Friday in Singapore.

"He will be remembered in perpetuity for his brilliant discoveries that ushered in a new era of science and a new generation of scientists," said Ronald Evans, a biologist at the institute.

Brenner shared the Nobel Prize in medicine in 2002 for his contribution to work unraveling how genes control cell division. He and two colleagues, John Sulston and Robert Horvitz, traced a transparent roundworm known as *C. elegans* to determine how cells divide and create something new.

The findings on programmed cell death were key to understanding how cancers develop and laid the groundwork for making *C. elegans* a major model organism in research.

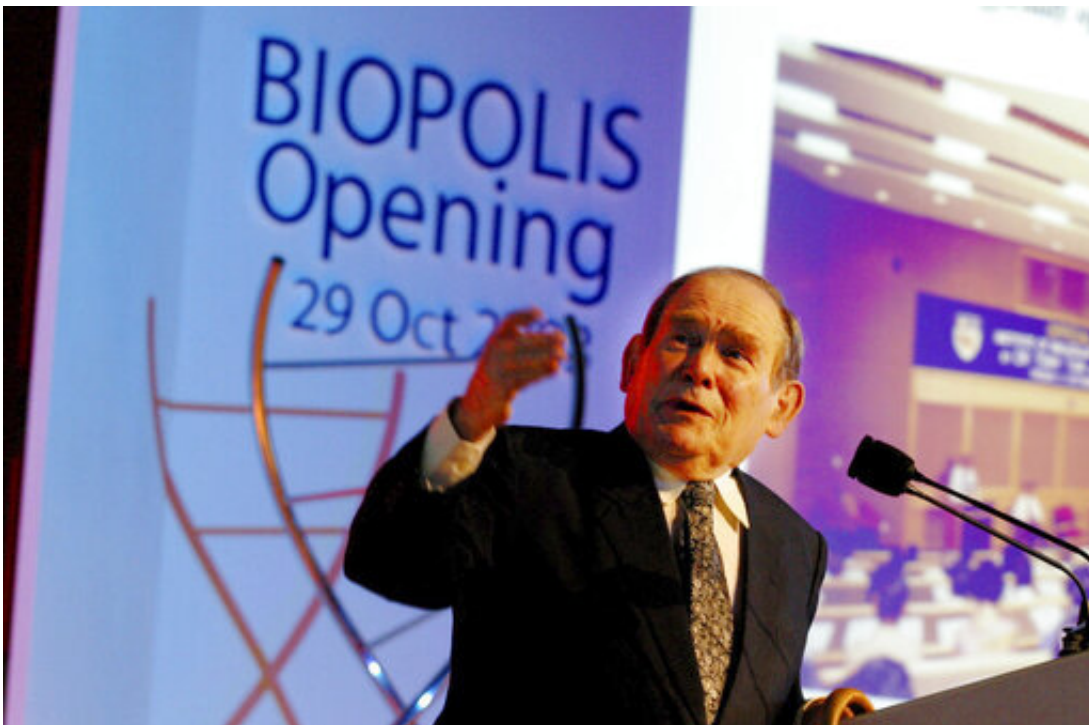
His most important contribution to science, however, was the work he did with Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of DNA, and others to determine the genetic code. In 1961 they demonstrated that DNA is made up of a series of three nucleotides called codons, which encode the amino acids that make up a protein.



In this Monday, Dec. 10, 2002, file photo, Dr. Sydney Brenner of South Africa, left, receives the Nobel Prize in Medicine from King Carl Gustaf of Sweden, right, during a ceremony at the Concert Hall in Stockholm, Sweden. Dr. Brenner, from the Molecular Sciences Institute, Berkeley, Calif., shares the prize with H. Robert Horvitz, of the United States and John E. Sulston, of Britain. Dr. Sydney Brenner, a Nobel Prize-winning biologist who helped decipher the genetic code and whose research on a roundworm laid the groundwork for decades of human disease research, has died. The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in Calif., said Brenner died Friday, April 5, 2019 in Singapore. He was 92. (AP Photo/Henrik Montgomery/Pool, File)

He also helped discover messenger RNA, the molecule that directs the cell's production of [amino acids](#).

Born in South Africa in 1927, Brenner spent much of his early career in Britain, earning his PhD from the University of Oxford. Later, he joined the University of Cambridge and shared an office with Crick for 20 years.



In this Oct. 29, 2003, file photo, Nobel laureate Dr. Sydney Brenner of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in San Diego, Calif., gives a lecture at the opening of Biopolis in Singapore. Dr. Brenner, a Nobel Prize-winning biologist who helped decipher the genetic code and whose research on a roundworm laid the groundwork for decades of human disease research, has died. The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in California said Brenner died Friday, April 5, 2019 in Singapore. He was 92. (AP Photo/Wong Maye-e, File)

In the early 1990s, Brenner went to California where he first worked at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla and later rejoined Crick as a distinguished professor at the Salk Institute. He spent the last part of his career building the biomedical sciences in Singapore, where he became its first honorary citizen.

Brenner is survived by his three children. His wife died in 2010.

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