

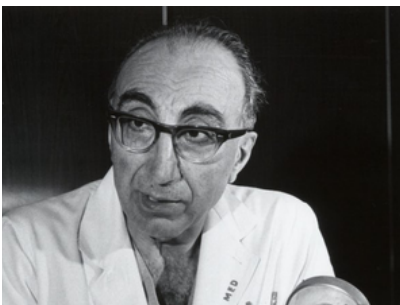
DEBAKEY CLAMP

Written by: Dr Chris de Gara

Michael DeBakey was born in Louisiana in 1908. His parents, Shiker and Raheeja Dabaghi) were immigrants from Lebanon. DeBakey was the eldest of five children. His brother Ernest also became a physician, specializing in general and thoracic surgery. DeBakey stated that **"the future of biomedical research; and ultimately human health"** would be compromised if shelters stopped turning over surplus animals for medical research. Responding to the need for animal research, DeBakey said that:



"Scientists, veterinarians, physicians, surgeons and others who do research in animal labs are as much concerned about the care of the animals as anyone can be. Their respect for the dignity of life and compassion for the sick and disabled, in fact, is what motivated them to search for ways of relieving the pain and suffering caused by diseases."



DeBakey continued to practice medicine until his death in 2008 at the age of 99. His contributions to the field of medicine spanned the better part of 75 years. DeBakey **operated on more than 60,000 patients**, including several heads of state. He and a team of US cardiothoracic surgeons supervised quintuple-bypass surgery by Russian surgeons on Russian president Boris Yeltsin in 1996.

In 2005, DeBakey suffered an aortic dissection. He initially resisted the surgical option, but as his health deteriorated and he became unresponsive, the surgical team opted to proceed with surgical intervention (approved by the Houston Methodist's ethics committee). DeBakey at age 98 became the oldest patient ever to undergo the surgery for which he was responsible. His aorta was replaced with a Dacron graft, similar to one he had pioneered decades earlier.

A member of numerous learned societies, **he gained 36 honorary degrees and was the recipient of hundreds of awards**. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Medal of Science, the United Nations Lifetime Achievement Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Foundation for Biomedical Research and in 2000 was cited as a "Living Legend" by the Library of Congress. On April 23, 2008, he received the Congressional Gold Medal.

DeBakey was described as a **"tough taskmaster"** by colleagues and trainees. "He could be sweet as dripping honey when it came to patients and medical students but could be brutal with surgical residents."