



available at www.sciencedirect.com



journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/jbmt



Obituary: David Simons (1922–2010) – the next adventure

Jan Dommerholt, PT, DPT, MPS*

Bethesda Physiocare/Myopain Seminars, 7830 Old Georgetown Road, Suite C-15, Bethesda, MD 20814-2440, USA



On April 5, 2010, Dr. David Simons, co-author of the Trigger Point Manuals and author of many innovative and thought-provoking articles and research studies on myofascial trigger points, started what he described as “the next adventure”, when he passed away at the age of 87.

Dave Simons was a pioneer not just in musculo-skeletal medicine, but also in aerospace explorations. After receiving his medical degree in 1946 from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, PA, he served in the United States Air Force, initially as a researcher and during the Korean conflict as a flight surgeon. As project officer for balloon flights at the Aeromedical Field Laboratory at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, he was particularly interested in the effects of galactic cosmic radiation on living tissue. On August 19, 1957, his career reached new heights, when he became the first man in outer space traveling 101,516 feet above the Earth in a pressurized gondola as part of the Man High Project. This 36-hour record-breaking high altitude balloon flight earned him a place on the cover of Life magazine and the title of “Father of Radiobiology”.

When attending a two-day lecture and demonstration by Dr. Janet Travell in 1963, he was immediately intrigued by the concept of myofascial trigger points (MTrPs) and described her lectures and demonstrations as “a revelation” and “awe-inspiring”. Following his 1965 retirement from the US Air Force, Dr. Simons became coordinator of research at the Veterans Administration and had the opportunity to meet with

and learn from Dr. Travell. Inspired by her teachings, he became certified as a physiatrist and started examining and treating patients with MTrPs. He continued to work with Dr. Travell, and in 1981, they published the first MTrP hypothesis. Eventually, Dr. Simons became the driving force behind writing the Trigger Point Manuals, which have been translated into many foreign languages.

Perhaps the words of Hugh Elliot offer a good characterization of our mentor, friend, colleague and teacher Dave Simons: “I am not dying, not anymore than any of us are at any moment. We run, hopefully as fast as we can, and then everyone must stop. We can only choose how we handle the race.”

Throughout his life, Dave Simons ran as fast as he could, trying to accomplish as much as possible. At age 85, he started writing a book about global warming out of concern for the well-being and future of the world. When asked why he would take on such an endeavor, he replied that since there are now enough clinicians and researchers in the world carrying on MTrP research and clinical practice, he was no longer concerned that MTrPs soon would be forgotten. “I think I can serve the world better by explaining the real threat of global warming,” he explained. In 2009, he decided not to publish the book after all, but the energy and fervor he displayed was truly inspiring. Instead, he returned to work on the next edition of the Trigger Point Manuals, which he continued until just a few days before his death.

Dave Simons will be remembered by doctors, physical therapists, chiropractors, osteopaths, massage therapists, body workers and many other healthcare providers worldwide. His work has and will continue to inspire researchers and clinicians. Every day, thousands of clinicians treat even more thousands of patients based on the works by Travell and Simons. It gave David great pleasure realizing that so much unnecessary suffering was relieved as a result of his endeavors.

It seems likely that in his next adventure, David Simons will once again reach new heights and continue to amaze us.

* Tel.: +1 301 656 5613; fax: +1 301 654 0333.