

## Visiting Professor Program – Named Lectureships



**William A. Altemeier, M.D.**

Dr. William A. Altemeier was born on July 6, 1910, in Cincinnati which became his life-long home. In his early years, he was an outstanding baseball player but turned down a professional career with the St. Louis Browns to continue his medical studies. His interest in microbiology was stimulated by Dr. William Wherry while still a medical student, but at the advice of Dr. Mont Reid he took his surgical training under the tutelage of Dr. Roy McClure at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit where he performed classic works on the microbiology of intra-abdominal infections. After this training, he returned to Cincinnati as an Instructor of Surgery, and was selected as the Christian R. Holmes Professor and Chairman of the Department of Surgery in 1952. During the next 26 years in this position, he became one of the most influential and respected surgeons of modern times.

Dr. Altemeier's investigations in surgical infections led to 349 publications, but more importantly benefited surgical patients throughout the world. His studies focused on antibiotic therapy, tetanus, gas gangrene, postoperative wound infections, shock, trauma, burns, diseases of the GI tract, and even cancer. In addition, he was an astute clinician and an expert technical surgeon who readily shared his knowledge with his colleagues and the 110 chief residents he trained. Indeed, his outreach through his trainees was his proudest accomplishment.

He was honored by election to Presidency of the American Surgical Association, the American College of Surgeons, the Surgical Infection Society, the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, the Central Surgical Association, the Society of Clinical Surgery, the Roy D. McClure Surgical Society, and the University of Cincinnati Graduate Surgical Society. His honors included the Harvey S. Allen Distinguished Service Award of the American Burn Association, the 33rd Degree of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, the Distinguished Service Award of the American College of Surgeons, the first Distinguished Award from the Henry Ford Hospital, honorary fellowships in the Royal College of Surgeons of England and Edinburgh, and the Great Living Cincinnati Award.

Dr. Altemeier served as a Principal Investigator on numerous research projects under contract with the U.S. Army and the U.S. Public Health Service. He also served as a member of the Division of Medical Sciences of the National Research Council on the Subcommittee on

Trauma from 1950-1951. In 1953 he was appointed consultant to the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army to study the problem of infection and delayed shock in the Korean battle area.

His multiple contributions to the University included fund-raising efforts which were responsible for building the Surgical Research Unit, and he was instrumental in bringing the Shriners Burns Institute to the city of Cincinnati.

He spoke of himself, "I am indeed appreciative for the life of fulfillment I have had as an active investigator in the areas of surgical infections as well as a clinical surgeon and a Professor and teacher. It has stimulated my interest, satisfied my inquisitiveness, enlarged my scope of knowledge and friends, and given me the privilege of providing health through knowledge and research to physicians and their patients everywhere."

On November 23, 1983, Dr. Altemeier expired quietly at Holmes Hospital after a short battle with cancer.