Maynard M. Cohen, MD, PhD, an internationally renowned pioneer of modern neurology, died on February 18, 2014 in Miami, Florida. He was 93.

Dr. Cohen spent much of his career at what is now Rush University Medical Center (formerly Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke’s Medical Center), where he was the Jean Schweppe Armour Professor and chairperson in the Department of Neurological Sciences and also a professor in the Department of Biochemistry from 1970 to 1993.

An expert in stroke, he conducted the first clinical trial of the drug pentoxifylline, which is now widely used to treat problems caused by poor blood circulation. He also made significant discoveries related to neurotoxicology, specifically regarding phosphorus brain metabolism.

“Maynard knew every important senior neurologist in the field and brought these experts to Rush to lecture, to teach residents and students, and to create a constantly dynamic environment of scientific and clinical discovery”, remembers Christopher Goetz, MD, a Rush neurologist who studied under and worked with Cohen.

Dr. Cohen presented and published hundreds of articles during more than half a century of neurological research. He authored textbooks and led international symposia, playing a leadership role in the World Federation of Neurology.

He also helped form the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) and served as its president from 1981-1983. In 1989, the AAN recognized his contributions with its first Distinguished Service Award.

In addition, Cohen was the founding president of the Association of University Professors of Neurology, established in 1967. His leadership at Rush included terms as an assistant vice president for the Medical Center and an associate dean at Rush Medical College.

Dr. Cohen was honored at home and abroad for his contributions. He was elected to the Norwegian Academy of Sciences in Letters in 1982 and was a Fulbright Professor on the faculty of medicine of the University of Oslo, Norway, in 1977. Based on his interviews and friendships with his Norwegian colleagues, he wrote a book describing the role of physicians in the resistance to Nazi occupation of Norway during World War II. A Stand Against Tyranny: Norway’s Physicians and the Nazis was published in 1997 by Wayne University Press.

Dr. Cohen grew up in Detroit and received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan in 1941. He received his Medical Degree from Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit in 1944, graduating with distinction. In later years, he also received the Wayne State University Alumni Award and the Distinguished Service Award from the Wayne State University School of Medicine. He served as Captain in the Army of the United States during WWII, stationed at the 34th General Hospital near in Seoul. He completed his internship and residency training at Detroit
and Minneapolis hospitals and following a year of research at the University of Oslo, earned his PhD in Neurochemistry from the University of Minnesota (UMN) in Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1953.

Cohen then rose to professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at the UMN Medical School, where he also was director of the Center for Cerebrovascular Research. Cohen came to Chicago in 1963 to head the neurology department at Rush. He also held positions as head of the Division of Neurology and a professor of pharmacology at the University of Illinois College of Medicine.

An enthusiastic athlete, Dr. Cohen was a skilled competitive tennis player. He read widely and, a lover of classical music, also played the viola. With his wife, Doris Vidaver, he organized the humanities program at Rush University that drew on international literature and ethical writing. He traveled extensively and was fluent in Italian and Norwegian, and read Spanish, German, French, Danish and Swedish.

Maynard Cohen is survived by his wife, Doris Vidaver, his daughters Deborah Vidaver-Cohen and Elena (Nini) Cohen, son-in-law Steve Ritz, and grandsons Benjamin and Jacob Ritz. He was buried with military honors at the South Florida National Cemetery of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.