

This Week's Citation Classic®

Swann M M. The control of cell division: a review. I. General mechanisms. *Cancer Res.* 17:727-57, 1957.
[Department of Zoology, University of Edinburgh, Scotland]

This review covers some of the factors that, 30 or so years ago, seemed to be important in the control of mitosis and cell division: energy supply, cell size, nutritional requirements, mitotic inhibitors, the dissociation of growth and division, and the role of both nucleus and cytoplasm. [The *SCI*® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 210 publications.]

Lord Swann
House of Lords
London SW1
England

August 15, 1986

It came as a considerable surprise to hear from ISI® that a review I wrote nearly 30 years ago had been identified as one of the "most ever" cited papers in its field. I never thought it was as interesting as the second part of the review, published a year later.¹

The editor, I learn, encourages us to write from a personal standpoint, and since my last research publication was in 1962, it occurs to me, at the age of 66, that a few reflections from a scientist who started drifting off into administration at the age of 42 might be more to the point than attempting an appraisal of the influence, if any, of my *Citation Classic*.

Does one regret having given up research? Yes, on occasion, inevitably. On the other hand, I came gradually to realise that although I was a competent scientist, I was not very original and certainly not inspired. And if I had any doubts on this score, they were certainly dispelled by knowing Crick, Watson, and the great men of the DNA revolution.

On the other hand, I discovered, when I became a professor at Edinburgh University, that I very much liked running a department, finding new staff, and creating an environment in which others could work. I like to think I was rather good at it. Before long, I became dean of the Faculty of Science and then principal of the university, at a time when it was expanding fast and money was available in plenty for setting up new ventures.

I enjoyed it very much, and I had every intention of going on until I retired. But when Edward Heath, prime minister at the time, asked me if I would become chairman of the BBC because he had come to the conclusion that the BBC was most like a university and needed that sort of touch, I said yes. And I enjoyed that equally.

Nowadays, I am partly retired, but I still do a lot of things, some of them related to science. And I enjoy this too, not least having become a member of what is sometimes called the most agreeable eventide home in Britain, namely, our extraordinary Upper House of Parliament. We clean up, or even promote, legislation, we have debates on all sorts of things, quite often scientific, and we have committees that pronounce in all directions. Most recently, I have been on one that will soon recommend what Britain should do about nuclear energy in the wake of Chernobyl.

Perhaps all the things I have done in the last quarter of a century seem a far cry from research. But often I have found them curiously similar, and I don't believe I would, or could, have done them had I not started as I did. I recommend the idea of change to anyone who, like me, comes to the conclusion that they are not as good at research as they once hoped.

1. Swann M M. The control of cell division: a review. II. Special mechanisms. *Cancer Res.* 18:1118-60, 1958.
(Cited 170 times.)