

Viagra developer Furchgott dead at 92: report

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US pharmacologist Robert Furchgott, a Nobel prize-winning pharmacologist whose work with the gas nitric oxide helped develop the anti-impotency drug Viagra, has died at the age of 92, The New York Times has reported. Furchgott, seen here in 1998, was from South Carolina.

Robert Furchgott, a Nobel prize-winning pharmacologist whose work with the gas nitric oxide helped develop the anti-impotency drug Viagra, has died at the age of 92, The New York Times reported Sunday.

The newspaper said his daughter Susan Furchgott had confirmed the death, which occurred on Tuesday in Seattle.

According to The Times, research by Furchgott, Louis Ignarro and Ferid Murad has proven that [nitric oxide](#), widely known as an air pollutant, also acted as an important signal in the [cardiovascular system](#), mediating [blood](#) pressure and blood flow.

This ability of nitric oxide to enlarge blood vessels was an important step in the development by Pfizer Corporation of the drug sildenafil citrate, which is also known as [Viagra](#).

The drug ameliorates impotence by increasing blood flow to the penis. Pfizer has called the nitric acid discovery "a small piece of information" in its inventing of the drug.

In awarding Furchgott and his colleagues the prize for medicine in 1998, the Swedish Nobel assembly praised them for providing the first proof that a gas can perform important biochemical functions in the body.

Furchgott was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 4, 1916, and developed an early interest in birds, shells and other natural phenomena. He earned a degree in chemistry from the University of North Carolina and a doctorate in biochemistry from Northwestern University.

In the 1950s, Furchgott developed a method for determining how blood vessels respond to medications, neurotransmitters and hormones, using a rabbit's artery. This allowed him to study the effects of drugs on vascular smooth muscle.

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