

# Henry Lynch, pioneering cancer researcher, dead at 91

June 5 2019

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Henry Lynch, a pioneering cancer researcher who was among the earliest to probe its genetic causes, has died at the age of 91.

During the 1960s, Lynch was one of the first researchers to examine familial susceptibility to certain cancers at a time when the prevailing wisdom held that [environmental factors](#) were the main driver.

His death on June 2 was announced by the American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in a statement late Tuesday.

His early grant applications were frequently rejected but he persisted, founding in 1984 a hereditary [cancer](#) registry at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, which now contains the cancer histories of more than 3,000 families.

ASCO said among his most notable achievements was the identification of a strain of inherited [colon cancer](#) that was named "Lynch syndrome" after him in 1984.

He is also credited with the discovery of hereditary breast-ovarian cancer syndrome, which led to the identification of the inherited BRCA gene mutations that affect the body's ability to repair damaged DNA and is today vital in screening and prevention.

Born in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1928, Lynch grew up in New York and used a false ID to enlist in the Navy as a 16-year-old in the Pacific

theater in World War II.

After being discharged, Lynch, who stood at six foot five, had a brief boxing career under the moniker "Hammerin' Hank," before completing his high-school equivalency and embarking upon further studies and his medical career.

He is survived by three children and preceded in death by his wife Jane, a psychiatric nurse.

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