The First Annual
William H. Sweet
Lecture on Functional
Neurosurgery and Pain
December 6, 2001
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 am.
Ether Dome
William H. Sweet, M.D.

William H. Sweet was a pioneer in neurological research and treatments for pain. He was the third president of the American Pain Society (1981–1982) and received the F.W.L. Kerr Basic Science Research Award in 1990. Dr. Sweet died in January 2001.

In his more than 60 years of service to the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Dr. Sweet held numerous positions, culminating in his tenure as chief of neurosurgical service from 1961 to 1977. He made many important contributions to clinical care and neuroscience, helping patients with chronic pain, cerebrovascular disorders, epilepsy, and brain tumors. He was one of the first neurosurgeons to stress the significance of research in academic neurosurgery.

Dr. Sweet’s best-known contributions involved the development of proton beam and neutron capture therapy for treatment of brain tumors and the establishment of the first brain imaging laboratories. He pioneered the development of invasive treatments of trigeminal neuralgia and developed the use of cordotomy for the treatment of intractable pain in patients. His work in the 1950s laid the foundation for the development of the neurostimulators used today to treat severe pain.

A graduate of the University of Washington and Harvard Medical School, Dr. Sweet was also a Rhodes Scholar, spending two years at Oxford University. Throughout his career, he received many awards and honors, including the Cushing Medal of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons and the Distinguished Service Award of the Society of Neurological Surgeons. Dr. Sweet was active in many neuroscience organizations. He was permanent Honorary President of the World Federation of Neurological Societies, a founding member of the International Association for the Study of Pain and the American Pain Society, as well as past president of other organizations dedicated to neurosurgery and pain. He served on Study Sections and Advisory Committees of the National Institutes of Health, and he was a member of the Scientific and Technology Advisory Committee of NASA’s Office of Manned Space Flight.
The First Annual William H. Sweet Lecture on Functional Neurosurgery and Pain was established at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in 2001, shortly after Dr. Sweet’s death. Will Sweet was a pioneer in the field of functional neurosurgery and neurosurgical management of pain. During a brilliant 64-year career at the MGH, Dr. Sweet, his colleagues, and trainees pioneered the use of neurostimulation of the peripheral and central nervous system as well as other functional neurosurgical techniques. That tenure included 16 years as Chief of Neurosurgery.

This visiting lectureship is intended to honor the memory of Dr. Sweet, to preserve his legacy, and to educate health care providers about neurosurgical treatment options for the management of chronic pain. Each year, an academic leader in pain and functional neurosurgery will be invited to the MGH to present the Sweet lecture and meet with Dr. Sweet’s former colleagues and trainees. Medtronic is pleased to sponsor the Sweet lectureship in recognition of Dr. Sweet’s exceptional contribution to the advancement of neurostimulation technology.
“Tic Douloureux”

John D. Loeser, M.D.
Professor of Neurological Surgery and Anesthesiology
University of Washington
John D. Loeser, M.D.

John D. Loeser is Professor of Neurological Surgery and Anesthesiology at the University of Washington, where he has been a faculty member since 1969. Director of the university’s Multidisciplinary Pain Center from 1983 to 1997, Dr. Loeser is a graduate of Harvard College and New York University School of Medicine. He was a surgery intern at the University of California, San Francisco, and a neurosurgery resident at the University of Washington. Active in research, teaching and patient care in the field of pain management for over 30 years, Dr. Loeser was a founding member of the American Pain Society, the American Academy of Pain Medicine, and the International Association for the Study of Pain. The past president of the APS and the IASP, he is the editor of the recently released Third Edition of Bonica’s Management of Pain.
Cover art, logo and photo of Dr. Sweet courtesy of the MGH Public Affairs office.