

1988

## Biography

Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

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**Richard S. Koch, D.O.**  
**F.A.A.O., F.A.C.G.P.**  
Class of 1938

Underneath a gentlemanly polish and calm exterior, Dick Koch is a fighter. He has wrestled alligators in Florida and captured an eight-foot octopus in the Pacific, and once in his boxing salad days he fought Jersey Joe Wolcott, who went on to become heavyweight champion of the world.

Richard S. Koch, D.O., went on to become heavyweight champion of osteopathic medicine in Olympia, Washington.

His alma mater, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, which has known Dr. Koch as a member of its board of trustees for 14 years, as a graduate for 50 years and as a friend for life, is proud this Founders Day to confer its highest award, the O.J. Snyder Memorial Medal, upon this gifted, energetic and articulate osteopathic physician.

As a young man, Dick Koch became interested in medicine while a student at Cheltenham high school. After earning his pre-med degree from the University of Alabama, he returned to Philadelphia, choosing PCO in 1934 over a well-known traditional school of medicine because he had seen osteopathic treatment succeed where allopathic medicine had failed. In 1939 the newly graduated, newly interned Richard Koch, D.O., knowing that his life's work as a medical revolutionary lay ahead, set his course for Washington's state capital, Olympia, where he opened an office on 11th Avenue.

More than two millenia earlier Hippocrates wrote "Life is short, opportunity fleeting, judgment difficult, treatment easy; but treatment after thought is proper and profitable." Those words, quoted in the 1938 *Synopsis* that accompanied Dick Koch's graduation from PCO, could have been a model for his 49-year osteopathic medical practice in Olympia. As thousands of his patients in the Pacific Northwest will attest, Dr. Koch's "treatment after thought" has produced applications for the principles of osteopathic medicine that extend well beyond a record of individual cases and into the realm of clinical osteopathic research. Since the early Fifties, his office pa-

tients have stood for full postural x-rays of the spine, which, when considered over time, produce an extraordinary picture of relative musculoskeletal health and functional rehabilitation. Just as important, they are visual testimony to the success of Dr. Koch's osteopathic treatment.

It was his successful national politicking in the sixties, however, that produced a change in the way the profession identifies itself. *Osteopathy*, Dr. Koch believed, needed a new image which proclaimed the parity with M.D.s that had been gained as state after state approved D.O.s for practice. Now, with full licensure, it was time for *Osteopathic Medicine* to take its rightful place in society. PCOM agreed in 1968, changing its name, and helping to lead a profession-wide movement.

With Puget Sound at his doorstep and a love of swimming as his motivation, Dick Koch began an early romance with the sea that has had a number of medical side effects. His list of scientific and sports affiliations is weighted heavily in favor of organizations whose work takes them to the ocean floor. Understanding the physical and biomedical processes that take over as people plunge underwater has led Dr. Koch to develop treatment modalities that employ exercises and osteopathic technique for land-bound patients.

Dr. Koch's frequent lectures on rehabilitation medicine and another favorite treatment modality, sclerotherapy, his board memberships, including the board of trustees of PCOM, the PCOM Alumni board, the boards of the American Academy of Osteopathy, the American College of Osteopathic General Practitioners and many others, all have tempered a physician whose world view contributes extensively to furthering the vision of the profession.

Dick Koch's tireless support of this institution, his dedication to the practice of osteopathic principles, and his unbounded enthusiasm for osteopathic education and research amply justify his recognition as recipient of the 1988 O.J. Snyder Memorial Award.