



Charles H. Best MD DSc

Charles Herbert Best, just a few weeks after receiving an Honours Baccalaureate in physiology and chemistry, jumped at the chance to assist Dr. Frederick Banting with a research endeavour that would eventually change the lives of millions. It was the classic case of being the right man in the right place at the right time. Less than three months later, Best's name was known throughout the medical world, and he had not even begun his medical studies.

Throughout Banting and Best's research at The University of Toronto, Banting completed the surgical work and Best conducted post-surgery chemical analyses. By the end of the summer, their hard work and determination had paid off; Banting and Best had isolated insulin, an internal secretion produced by the pancreas that could be used to treat diabetes.

With the help of Dr. James Collip, the insulin was purified, allowing it to be made available for clinical trials on human subjects. In 1923, when Banting won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with J.J.R. Mcleod, he shared his award and recognition with Best.

Following the discovery of insulin, Best went on to complete doctorates in both medicine and physiology. As a professor of physiology at The University of Toronto, Best joined Banting as co-director of the Banting and Best Medical Research Department in 1930. From the time of the department's inception, Best held the position of Honourary Research Associate. After Banting's death in 1941, Best was appointed Chair of the department and remained in this position until his retirement in 1967.

During his tenure at the Banting and Best Medical Research Department, Best remained committed to research and was successful in isolating heparin, which was found to be an effective anti-coagulant. He also focused his research on various insulin-related problems and contributed to the war effort by researching night vision and seasickness.

For his numerous contributions to medical research, Best was named Advisor to the United Nations World Health Organization's Medical Research Committee and received eighteen honorary degrees from universities around the world.