Inventor of Ibuprofen, Stewart Adams, Passes Away at 95

Ibuprofen discovered thanks to a hangover.

Dr. Stewart Adams, who helped discover Ibuprofen, passed away January 30th, 2019. The British pharmacist discovered the painkiller when he ended up curing his own hangover in the 1970’s.

According to the legend of the discovery, Dr. Adams was scheduled to address a pharmacology conference in Moscow, but he was feeling a bit hungover from the night before where his hosts had toasted him with multiple shots of vodka. So he decided to take 600 mg of a new drug he had co-patented called Brufen, a pain-reliever he had originally created for rheumatoid arthritis sufferers. However, he found that it also helped to ease his headache.

Dr. Adams told the Daily Telegraph in 2007 referring to that morning in Moscow that he was “testing the drug in anger, if you like. But I hoped it really could work magic.”

Born in 1923 in Byfield, Northamptonshire, Dr. Adams had left school at 16 to start an apprenticeship in a retail pharmacy run by Boots Pure Drug Company Ltd. This led to a degree in pharmacy at the University of Nottingham, followed by a PhD in pharmacology at Leeds University. Then finally returning to Boots to continue his research.

Dr. Adams, his colleague, John Nicholson, and their research team made the drug discovery
and went into clinical use in 1969 after it was found to be effective and to cause fewer side-effects than the other widely used anti-inflammatory drugs at the time, which included aspirin.

After Dr. Adams experiment in Moscow, Ibuprofen was cleared for over-the-counter use in 1983, which is when he also formally retired from Boots, yet remained a consultant for 10 more years. Queen Elizabeth II made him an Officer of the British Empire in 1987 for his services to science.

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