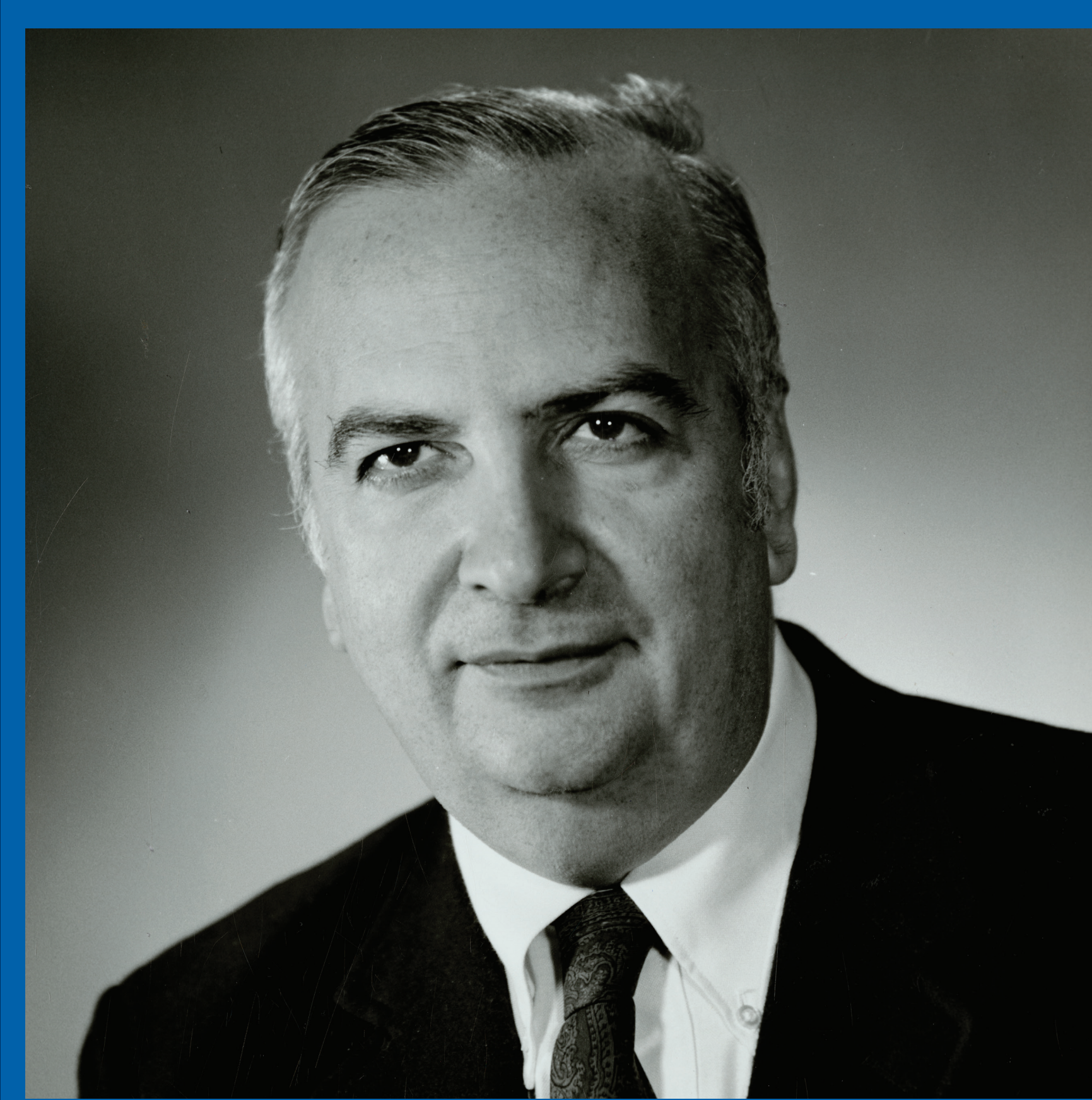


Baruj Benacerraf

VENEZUELAN-AMERICAN IMMUNOLOGIST AND NOBEL LAUREATE



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BACKGROUND

Born on October 29, 1920, in Caracas, Venezuela, Baruj Benacerraf came from a multicultural family of Spanish-Moroccan and French-Jewish heritage. He spent much of his early life in Paris before relocating to the United States during World War II. Benacerraf studied at Columbia University, earning a degree in science before pursuing medicine at the Medical College of Virginia. Despite facing discrimination as a foreign born student, he persevered and became a U.S. citizen in 1943, setting the stage for a groundbreaking career in medical science.

CAREER

Benacerraf built a distinguished career in immunology, holding research and teaching positions at institutions including New York University, the National Institutes of Health, and Harvard Medical School. In the 1960s, he made a discovery identifying genes that control immune responses, known as immune response (Ir) genes. His work demonstrated how the body distinguishes between its own cells and foreign invaders, a fundamental principle in immunology. In 1980, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine alongside Jean Dausset and George Snell.

IMPACT

Benacerraf's discoveries had a profound impact on medicine, transforming how doctors understand and treat disease. His research made organ transplantation safer and more successful, while also advancing treatments for autoimmune disorders, allergies, and cancer. As a leader in American medical institutions, he helped shape scientific research and education, strengthening the nation's role as a global leader in biomedical innovation.

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