In memoriam Dr. J. R. Frey

Johann Rudolf Frey received his scientific training in Switzerland and Chile and after spending several years in clinical dermatology turned his attention to experimental research. In 1947 he settled in Basel, Switzerland and joined the research establishment of F. Hoffmann-La Roche & Co. AG where he founded an experimental dermatology unit. Realising that contact sensitivity is a major cause of morbidity in a highly industrialised society, as evidenced by such conditions as cement dermatitis in the building industry, sensitivity to epoxy resins and hardeners in the electronic industry and to accelerators in the rubber industry, he directed his research towards the study of contact sensitivity in experimental animals. In 25 years of creative experimental work he drew the attention of the scientific community to the decisive role of immunological mechanisms, and especially of cell-mediated reactions, in the pathogenesis of these diseases. From his many scientific contributions we would like to give only two representative examples. In elegant experiments in guinea pigs he first demonstrated the importance of afferent lymphatic drainage of the site of sensitization and the particular role of lymph nodes and lymphocytes in contact sensitivity. His pictures of isolated skin flaps with intact vascular pedicle but freed from lymphatics will remain classics in this field. In more recent work J. R. Frey studied the mechanism of immunological
tolerance to simple chemicals in which his discovery of prolonged post-sensitization tolerance in the neoarsphenamine system paved the way for possible practical applications. His scientific achievements earned him the respect of his colleagues and friends. He was also greatly admired for the exemplary courage he displayed for more than 20 years in facing a progressive, disabling disease, which he never allowed to interfere with his scientific activities. This admiration and respect prompted the organization of a Collegium Internationale AUergologicum symposium in honour of his sixtieth birthday. The symposium summed up his life’s work, and on that occasion he was elected an honorary member of the Collegium Internationale AUergologicum. His loss will be keenly felt both by his family and friends and by his colleagues in the scientific community.