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Prof. Dr. Rudolf Pichlmayr

1932–1997

Prof. Dr. Rudolf Pichlmayr died on August 29, 1997, during the 37th World Congress of Surgery in Acapulco/Mexico while taking a morning swim. Born in 1932 in Munich, Germany he graduated from the Medical School of the University of Munich in 1956, and became a boardly qualified surgeon in 1964. In 1967, he presented his postdoctoral thesis to the Medical Faculty of the University of Munich for qualification as a Privatdozent. One year later, he and Prof. H.G. Borst moved to the Medizinische Hochschule in Hannover, Germany, to develop the newly established Department of Surgery. In 1969, Rudolf Pichlmayr was appointed there as Professor of Transplantation and Special Surgery, and in 1973 he was endowed with the first Chair of Abdominal and Transplantation Surgery in Germany.

He served his faculty as Dean for Education from 1974 to 1978, as Deputy Head for Research from 1989 to 1991, and as Chairman of the Ethical Committee since 1984. Rudolf Pichlmayr was president of numerous national and international scientific societies and organizations including expert panels, for example of the German Medical Association or the Department of Health of the Federal Government in Bonn. In 1996, Rudolf Pichlmayr as president of the German Society for Surgery organized the 113th Annual Congress in Berlin.

There is no question that Prof. Rudolf Pichlmayr must be recognized as promoter par excellence of transplantation medicine in Germany. When gaining his first experience with experimental transplantation at the Institute for Experimental Surgery at the University of Munich together then with the late Prof. Walter Brendel, he already succeeded in attracting an impressive group of young scientists and physicians for collaboration in the development of heterologous anti-lymphocyte serum – the Munich-ALS – for administration to patients with organ transplantations.

His postdoctoral thesis on *Production and Effects of Heterologous Anti-Dog Lymphocyte Serum* in 1968 received the von Langenbeck Award – the most prestigious recognition of the German Society for Surgery. Prof. Pichlmayr subsequently initiated and supervised a large number of experimental and clinical research programs in the field of transplantation surgery and biology, making his department a breeding place for transplantation in Hannover.

It should be further noticed that the first kidney transplantation in Hannover was carried out by Rudolf Pichlmayr in 1968, the first liver transplantation in 1972. Many transplant surgeons in Germany and

abroad consider it an honor to have been collaborating with him, either as students or as postdoctoral fellows. Aside from transplantation, Rudolf Pichlmayr was an internationally highly recognized expert of abdominal surgery, particularly liver surgery and surgical oncology. He was member of most distinguished surgical societies, for example of the European Society for Surgical Research and received prestigious awards and honors, such as the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, or the Honorary Fellowship of the American College of Surgeons. Only a few weeks prior to his untimely death, Rudolf Pichlmayr became elected as Honorary Member of the Japanese Surgical Society in recognition of his contributions to liver surgery and his promotion of collaboration between Japanese and German surgeons. He published a number of important books, among others the impressive volume *Transplantation Surgery* as part of the *Handbook of Surgery* in 1981 by Springer, Heidelberg and New York. Besides he was active in the editorial boards of important surgical and transplantation journals.

Rudolf Pichlmayr was twice coordinator and speaker of Special Research Programs (Sonderforschungsbereiche) supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The first program project was concerned with Further Development of Clinical Liv-

er, Heart and Lung Transplantation supported from 1986 to 1991, the other with Immune Reactions and Pathomechanisms in Organ Transplantation, which has been approved in 1992 and was just prolonged until 2001. Owing to the great personal influence of his academic mentor, Rudolf Zenker, ethical implications of organ donation and transplantation became a matter of increasing concern, making him a pacemaker in Germany for the legislation of organ transplantation, which was actually passed as law by the German Parliament shortly after his death in 1997. Together with his wife Professor Ina Pichlmayr he established the Foundation for Rehabilitation following Organtransplantation in Dölsach, Austria.

Rudolf Pichlmayr and his coworkers have continued over many years to contribute excellent scientific work, for example to the annual meetings of the European Society for Surgical Research. At the last congress of this society in Corfu, Greece, in May 1997, Professor Pichlmayr was giving the keynote, lecture on *Research and Ethical Problems in Xenotransplantation*. In this thoughtful essay he was anticipating the fundamental philosophical and biological issues and implications which are intriguingly involved in this rapidly developing field. Clinical and experimental surgeons worldwide are paying tribute to this great man.