

Professor Dr. med. Drs. h.c. Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer (1922 – 1997)



Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer was one of the most eminent figures in the field of Endocrinology and Metabolism. He was born in Frankfurt/Main on April 10, 1922 as the son of a well-known German Social Democrat. His family had a long history in European trading business. After his school exams in Frankfurt, Ernst Pfeiffer was drawn to the army and he had to serve as a German soldier in the front of the second world war in Russia, and then in the Mediterranean, which he used as an opportunity to learn Italian. He was wounded twice and was taken back to Germany, where he started with his studies in Medicine at the Universities of Munich, Heidelberg and Frankfurt/Main during the war. As a student in Munich, he fell in love with his later wife Margret who he married soon thereafter. Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer was trained in Internal Medicine with Franz Volhard and Ferdinand Iloff at the University of Frankfurt and with Willy Rubin in Davos/Switzerland. At the age of 26 Ernst Pfeiffer was promoted to M.D. Due to his early experimental work in autoimmunity and nephrology he obtained a research fellowship by the German Research Council, which took him to the United States of America where he was a pupil of George Thorn and Elliot P. Joslin and a co-worker of Albert Renold in Boston. At the age of 39, he obtained a tenure position as an Associate Professor of Endocrinology at the University of Frankfurt/Main and at the age of 41 he obtained calls for a professorship of Endocrinology & Metabolism at the New York Medical College, U.S.A. and at the University of Frankfurt/Main. In 1966 he was called for a chair of Internal Medicine at the University of Ulm, Germany where he was one of the founding professors of that new University. At Ulm Professor Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer was chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine, Head of the Departments of Endocrinology & Metabolism, Nephrology and Clinical Immunology, and he cancelled the academic affairs of the University of Ulm as its Rector from 1975 to 1979. In 1987, two years before his retirement from regular university duties in 1989, Professor Pfeiffer founded the Institute of Diabetes Technology at the University of Ulm which he headed ever since. At that Institute he prosecuted his favorite idea and goal, i.e. to develop an implantable

glucose sensor for the continuous measurement of glucose in the blood and subcutaneous tissue which should be part of an artificial pancreas.

Through his experimental work, his ideas and progressive, unconventional thinking Professor Pfeiffer has influenced many researchers and areas of medicine. He has published more than 500 scientific papers and quite a number of books. His approach to science was always very personal, driven by the "naive" curiosity to unravel the new and unknown. He was friends with many of the leading figures in the field of endocrinology and metabolism, in experimental medicine and convincing with politicians all over the world. Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer loved the challenge and competition, and he liked to confront others, knowing well that, with his vigor and charm he was able to achieve his goals. In the interest of a world-wide scientific dispute in his special field, Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer together with Rachmiel Levine founded **Hormone and Metabolic Research** in 1969, and he was the Editor-in-Chief and the driving force of this journal ever since.

Among many other obligations he was a founding member of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), president of the German Diabetes Association 1967/1968, president of the European Society for Internal Medicine 1974/1975, president of the German Society for Endocrinology 1977/1978, chairman of the "Study Group on Artificial Insulin Delivery Systems and Pancreas Transplantation" of the EASD from 1981 to 1984 and president of the German Society for Internal Medicine 1986/1987. He covered a number of positions at the International Diabetes Federation (IDF). A complete list of the honors and distinctions would go far beyond the scope of this obituary: Professor Pfeiffer was an honorary professor at the University of Lima, Peru (1977), and honorary doctor at the Universities of Athens, Greece (1979), Cairo, Egypt (1981) and Frankfurt/Main, Germany (1988). He was honorary member of National Diabetes Associations and Endocrine Societies of Argentina, Japan, Chile, Peru, Columbia, and Hungary; honorary member of the Royal Academy of Medical Sciences of Belgium, fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine (London), fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences, fellow of the All India Institute of Diabetes (Bombay, India) and honorary fellow of the Madras Medical College (Madras, India). He was given the Claude Bernard Medal and Lecture at the XIIth Congress of the EASD in Madrid, Spain in 1985 and the Albert A. Renold Medal of the EASD in 1990.

The achievements of Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer were not only based on his intelligence, his charisma and strong personality, but also on the constant support from his family: his wife Margret, his son and his daughter with their families. He was a wonderful grand-father, and always ready for some excitement and a good joke. Professor Ernst-Friedrich Pfeiffer died on January 23, 1997. His name will always be remembered by his many friends all over the world, by the scientific community and by the readers of **Hormone and Metabolic Research**.

Werner A. Scherbaum, M.D., Editor-in-Chief