

Obituary

In memoriam György Rajka (March 25 1925, Hungary- March 16 2013, Norway)



Professor Dr. med. György Rajka, chair of the Dermatology Department of the Oslo Riskhospitalet, was very close to his 88. birthday when he left us leaving behind his wife Zsuzsanna and his two sons Thomas Erik and Anders Georg.

György Rajka was born in Budapest, where his father, Ödön Rajka worked as an outstanding dermatologist and allergologist, a member of the Hungarian Scientific Academy. György Rajka studied medicine in Budapest and Pécs, and became resident at the Dermatology Department of the István Hospital in Budapest under the tutorship of his father, who chaired the department that time. This time could have been a particularly important period in his life, because he could learn not only dermatology, but also allergology from Ödön Rajka, the best specialist of the country. At that time György Rajka could participate in the foundation of the Dermatology Section of National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health where he had been also working for years. Meanwhile he learned and experienced a lot on the field of contact dermatitis, but also started to work with atopic dermatitis, a disease which later determined his full scientific carrier.

In 1957, closely after the defeat of the Hungarian Uprising, he fled to Sweden where he started as resident at the Dermatology Department of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. In 1964, he finished his thesis on "Atopic dermatitis" and in 1970 overtook the chairmanship at the University Department of Umeå. From 1971 he became director and professor at the Rikshospitalet Oslo, and chaired the institute for 24 years, till his retirement in 1995.

Through his dermatological activity and international connections, György Rajka contributed significantly to the development of dermatology in Norway. His Department in Oslo found international acknowledgement and became well recognized by scientific cooperations on the field of immunopathology, allergy and other areas of translational research. György Rajka was a member of the Norwegian Academy of Sciences (Norske Videnskaps Akademi) and honorary member of more international and national scientific societies and academies, also in Hungary.

His major interest, the interest of lifetime was atopic dermatitis, an area where his major achievements had been published. With the Portlander Jon Hanifin he developed the diagnostic criteria of the disease already in the 1970s. His knowledge on the field is well mirrored by his book on atopic dermatitis in 1975, followed by a second edition in 1989.

The research of György Rajka on atopic dermatitis became best recognized by his activities to organize international conferences where he invited outstanding clinicians and researchers from all over the world. In 1979 he organized the first International Symposium on atopic dermatitis in Oslo, and going on with this activity further atopic symposia developed in Loen, Bergen, Holmenkollen, Lillehammer, Aarhus, Davos, Rome, Portland, Arcachon, Kyoto, Munich, Moshi (Tanzania) and than the next one will be held in Nottingham (UK). After a time these conferences have been named after him as „Georg Rajka Symposium on Atopic Dermatitis”: The first like that was organized in Davos, 1998, and the next will be the 8th one, in Nottingham, 2014.

After his retirement he went on with his work in the national and international dermatology, but in wintertime he lived in the South of France. He visited Hungary more times, last we Hungarian dermatologists met him in 2004, at the EADV congress organized in Budapest, when he was invited to this event. His personal cordiality, his sense of humor and the simple way of speaking with us was unforgettable.

György Rajka was always open for new scientific ideas and supported the development of dermatology all over the world, and particularly the young dermatologists. He was kind to fully support from Norway the application of the Hungarian Nékám Foundation for the EU-Norway grants by his personal written recommendations with the goal to enhance the level of gradual and postgranual dermatological education and training at the Semmelweis University and to keep the young Hungarian dermatologists at home..

He was one of them whom we had to thank for the successful project supported from Norway.

This year we lost with him an internationally well recognized Hungarian-Norwegian dermatologist and great allergologist. We will keep the kind memory of professor György Rajka in honor.


Prof. Dr. Sarolta Kárpáti
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Chair of the Department for Dermatology, Venereology and Dermatooncology of the Semmelweis University, Budapest

President past of the Hungarian Dermatological Society

