

Obituary Univ. Prof. Dr. Dr.hc. Herbert Ehringer 1932-2023

We mourn the loss of Univ. Prof. Dr. Herbert Ehringer, who died on the 26th of March 2023, after a long and severe disease at the age of 90.

As doyen of Angiology / Vascular Medicine in Austria and Europe, he established the clinical specialty over 5 decades ago at the academic level and later set up the first clinical division of Angiology/Vascular Medicine in Austria at the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna, one of the oldest Universities north of the Alps (*1365). The division he set up flourishes until today at the (now called) Medical University of Vienna.

Herbert Ehringer was born 1932 in Bregenz and studied medicine at the University of Innsbruck. After obtaining his doctoral degree in 1957 sub auspiciis praesidentis rei publicae, he started his scientific career at the University of Vienna at the Institute of Pathology and the Institute of Pharmacology.

Already at this very early time he displayed the academic brilliance, which would characterize his career and life, identifying a loss of dopamine in the neo striata of patients with Morbus Parkinson. Until today this discovery is the basis of pathophysiology and treatment of patients with Morbus Parkinson (Ehringer H, Hornykiewicz O, [Distribution of noradrenaline and dopamine (3-hydroxytyramine) in the human brain and their behavior in diseases of the extrapyramidal system]. *Klin Wochenschr.* 1960 Dec 15;38:1236-9. German. doi: 10.1007/BF01485901. PMID: 13726012).

The development of an automated vein-occlusion-plethysmograph and the resulting publication in "Nature" – Ehringer H, Konzett H. Analysis of the vasodilator effect of adrenaline on the skeletal muscle vessels of man. *Nature.* 1962 Jun 23;194:1184. doi: 10.1038/1941184a0. PMID: 13889525 – marked his clinical and academic switch to the pathophysiology of the peripheral circulation. For this exceptional work, he was invited in 1964 from (at that time) University Department of Medicine I to establish the first Division of Vascular Medicine / Angiology in Austria, which is thus one of the oldest in the world.

Over the following decades, Herbert Ehringer developed "his" Division into one of the largest centers in Europe, shaping Vascular Medicine for the century to come: his relentless efforts resulted in the acknowledgment of Angiology/Vascular Medicine as a subspecialty of Medicine (Internal Medicine), based on which the independent specialty of "Medicine and Vascular Medicine" we now have in the entire DACH region was established.

Herbert Ehringer was Co-Founder and Spiritus Rector of many scientific and clinical societies, among them the "Österreichische Gesellschaft für Angiologie", the "Österreichische Gesellschaft für Internistische Angiologie" and the "Österreichischer Gefäßverband / VASCMED".

As Emeritus, from 1998 onwards, guided by his strong Christian beliefs, he decided to widen his social engagement: following the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004, he initiated the program "Medical Students without Borders": in the following twelve years, this program enabled more than 1500 medical students from 28 Universities from Middle, Eastern and Southern Europe, to complete a summer internship at Austrian hospitals and enjoy a rich accompanying cultural program. Some of those former students are now working as medical professionals in Austria – some at the Medical University of Vienna, even as Docents and Professors.

Herbert Ehringer's life's work was honoured several times:

- 2008 Honorary Doctoral Degree Medical Faculty University Prague
- 2014 Honorary Doctoral Degree Semmelweis University Budapest

- 2014 “Großes Ehrenzeichen” of the Republic of Austria
- 2022 VAS Prof. Klaus Breddin International Award for Education in Vascular Medicine

In Herbert Ehringer we lose a brilliant man and stimulating university teacher, who was a visionary and recognised the impact of clinical angiology at a very early stage. He was a pioneer, who made the advancement of this field his mission and purpose in life.

Our condolences go out to his family.

Ao. Univ. Prof. Dr. Gerit-Holger Schernthaner

Univ. Prof. Dr. Renate Koppensteiner