

## Obituaries

### In Memoriam

#### PROFESSOR MAREK SYCH

Dr Marek Sych, *Professor Ordinarius* of the Collegium Medicum of the Jagiellonian University, one of the pioneers of Polish anaesthesiology, died after a long illness on 1 May 1997.

He was born on 10 December 1923 in Cracow and it was there that he studied in the Faculty of Medicine of Jagiellonian University (1945–50). All his professional and academic life was dedicated to anaesthesiology and to intensive therapy. After he graduated from the University, political repression by the then authorities prevented him from working at the University. The reason was his involvement in clandestine activities during World War II, for which he had been imprisoned in a concentration camp, Kraków-Plaszów and from which he escaped successfully. He was allowed to return to Jagiellonian University in 1956 and organized, from scratch, the Department of Anaesthesiology at the First Surgery Clinic. In 1959 he was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship to study at the University of Madison, Wisconsin. In 1960 he received the title of MD (Doctor of Medicine) for his work 'The effect of the intra-abdominal administration of suxamethonium and gallamine on discoordinate breathing and ventilation perfusion', and in 1964 he received his post-doctoral degree (*habilitation*) on presentation and defence of his work 'Experimental studies on the mechanism of death from drowning in fresh water and the possibilities for resuscitation'. It was the first post-doctoral dissertation in the subject of anaesthesiology in Poland. Marek Sych was a pioneer in cardiopulmonary resuscitation in Poland and editor of the first handbook on resuscitation published in that country. The title of the book was *Resuscitation. Theory and Practice of Reanimation*. In 1979 he received the title of *Professor Extraordinarius*. By common recognition by the academic community in 1984 Marek Sych was democratically elected Rector of the School of Medicine (University School of Medical Sciences) in Cracow. In 1992 Marek Sych was promoted to the position of *Professor Ordinarius*.

Marek Sych's research interests embraced many problems, chiefly those concerning resuscitation. He was the initiator of 'brain storming', and this process resulted in the formulation of a new definition for death. He devoted heartfelt study to the ethical aspects of transplantation surgery. Professor Sych's research resulted in 139 publications and co-authorship of 30 books. During the 26 years that he was Head of the Department and then Chair of Anaesthesiology more than 100 physicians achieved their specialization. He supervised 10 doctoral dissertations and one post-doctoral (*habilitation*) dissertation. He was invited as a visiting professor to many universities, among them Harvard University Medical School, University of Columbia, Wilhelm University in Münster, Free University (Freie Universität) in Berlin, and also universities in Würzburg, Munich, Darmstadt, Cologne, Bochum, Bonn and Leuven.

In 1985 the European Academy of Anaesthesiology conferred on him the honorary title of Senator. He was also a member of the Executive Committee, European Society for Computing and Technology, member of the Editorial Board of *The European Journal of Anaesthesiology* and *Anästhesiologie Intensiv Medizin Notfallmedizin Schmerztherapie*.

The Council of the Royal College of Anaesthetists in Great Britain honoured him by electing him a Fellow of the College with the right to use the post-nominal F.R.C.A. He was also an honorary member of the German Society of Anaesthesiologists and the Polish Society of Anaesthesiologists.

He was a most excellent teacher, his lectures were simple and convincing. He paid great attention to the formation of algorithms, which facilitated diagnosis and quick implementation of treatment in emergencies. His interests were universal and not confined to medical problems alone. He played the violin, was a keen painter

and a sculptor in tree bark. He was a talented mediator with the capacity to assuage conflicts between people. He was a perfectionist in his work as a doctor and researcher.

It is reported that His Holiness Pope John Paul II, after hearing Marek Sych lecture on the definition of death at Castel Gandolfo, commented 'He really knew what he was talking about'.

In spite of his terminal disease, Marek Sych remained active until his last days both in the Chair of Anaesthesiology and outside the University. The most recent proof of continuing recognition and respect for his endeavours was his election as President of the Cracow Medical Society, one of the oldest scientific societies in Poland.

Polish anaesthesiology and the European Academy of Anaesthesiology have suffered a great loss with the death of Marek Sych, a man totally committed to the progress of anaesthesiology and intensive therapy. May he rest in peace.

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The Editor informs the Academy that the following member of the Academy died recently. May he rest in peace.

**DR THORARINN OLAFSSON, Reykjavik, Iceland.**