Obituary

Prof. Dr. Hartmut Hoffbauer will be memorized

With sadness we have to accept that a very special mentor, colleague and friend, who had dedicated his professional life to the development of new concepts in pre-and perinatal medicine has passed away on 22nd of April 2013 while staying at home with his family.

In his lifetime he has realized many goals for the improvement of maternal-fetal medicine and all his dreams in his private life. His humorous charm and competence made him to be loved by patients, colleagues, residents and students – whereby his striking characteristics were modesty, diligence and creativity in patient care, science and teaching. Without losing his gentleness he was fulfilled with dedication and tenacity. With this silent perseverance he has improved human, technical and organisational perinatal care in Berlin and Germany more from the background than on stage. On top of all, he was a pioneer of early prenatal ultrasound.

The family of Hartmut Hoffbauer derived from Silesia. His father Franz Joseph was a music teacher and even a conductor, choir leader, composer and piano teacher. He married one of his students Wanda Grün-peter who then converted from the Jewish to the catholic confession. Since his father accepted for some time a position near Kleve at the Dutch border Hartmut Hoffbauer was born on the 22nd of October 1914 in the lower Rhine region. When Hartmut was 2 years young, his family returned to Silesia where he grew up in Oppeln and visited the humanistic gymnasi- um until 1933.

He studied medicine in Breslau, whereby during his studies he had to serve in the Wehrmacht where he achieved the title as a medical officer. In between he even studied in Vienna but returned to Breslau where he passed his final exams. Since his mother was of Jewish origin he did not receive a final degree (Approbation) and even considered to immigrate to Brasilia. Unexpectedly, he was allowed to start to study after he met Willibald Pschyrembel to report on his findings on intrauterine therapy of Rhesus disease. Only now, in 1966, he performed the first intrauterine (intrapero- neal) transfusion under radiological control with contrast medium which was replaced by ultrasound controlled transfusions in the later 1970ies. In patients with extreme high antibody concentration Hoffbauer even used plasmapheresis combined with intrauterine blood transfusions.

Hoffbauer also worked on coagulation disorders during pregnancy and was one of the first who started to apply low dose heparin to prevent intrauterine growth retardation with the idea that this might prevent placental thrombosis. And he worked on prenatal infections using amnio- centesis to diagnose toxoplasma infection within the amniotic fluid.

One of his great contributions was to early recognize the enormous potential of the use of ultrasound for the diagnosis of early pregnancy, multiple pregnancy, placental localization, fetal growth and malformations and to systematically investigate the clinical implications. The Siemens Vido- son was one of the newer achievements in 1968 and ultrasound early became part of the routine pregnancy controls at the University Hospital Charlottenburg. Luckily, The first author could personally work with him during this fascinating pe- riod –still as a student- and got the chance to establish growth charts for multiple fe- tal characteristics including bones of all extremities. In addition, we could corre- late the results in growth retardation and macrosomic fetuses for fetal weight esti- mation.

After his retirement in 1980 Hartmut Hoffbauer opened a private policlinic in central West Berlin, which was primarily located in the Uhlandstrasse and later at the Kurfürstendamm. At the beginning, his wife even helped him with the organi-
sation and bureaucracy, which was not his strength. He also attracted gifted younger co-workers and subsequently also geneticists were included. This specified prenatal policlinic has grown to a wellrenown Berlin institution with recognized clinical and scientific output whereby Hartmut Hoffbauer even was a co-author with the first paper from this place. Here he continued to work until 2000 until the age of 85 years. Here he also celebrated his 80th birthday whereby Prof. Saling was one of his guests (Fig. 1).

Prof. Hoffbauer received quite some honors. In 1988 he became –together with Prof. G. Martius – honourable member of the Berlin Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

During the World Congress of Perinatal Medicine in Berlin in 2009, he received form the former president of the World Society of Perinatal Medicine, Prof. Chervenak, –together with Prof. Chaoui- the first Clara Angela Sculpture Price for his combined efforts for creativity and humanity in our field (Fig. 2).

Looking back to the life of Hartmut Hoffbauer and the start of own efforts in this field thanks to him we have to confess that it is difficult to decide what was more important to fascinate a young student to start with clinical scientific work and not to give up until a project was finished: Whether is was the humanity of Hartmut Hoffbauer whom we did not want to disappoint when he asked us to work hard and to help him with congress contributions yet allowing freedom and confidence be part of the cooperation or whether it was the fascinating topic of early fetal development.

But a great mentor is not characterized by fame or vanity but his capacity to induce joy and scientific curiosity and preciseness all in favour of the maternal and fetal patient whereby career thinking and top-down hierarchy of medical structures are no topics.

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Prof. Dr. Birgit Arabin, Prof. Dr. Eberhard Merz im Namen der DEGUM, Sektion Geburtsmedizin 2013

Fig. 1 Prof. Hartmut Hoffbauer (right) at his 80th birthday in 1994 visited by Prof. Erich Saling (left)

Fig. 2 Prof. Hartmut Hoffbauer at the age of 95 (second from left) together with his granddaughter (left) receiving the Clara Angela Price by Prof. Frank Chervenak (second from right) during the World Congress of Perinatal Medicine in Berlin.