

In Memoriam Reinhold Ernst Schmidt (*17.12.1951 bis †23.01.2022)



*Prof. Dr. med. Reinhold E. Schmidt,
at the DGfI honorary membership award
ceremony 2017 in Erlangen*

In Reinhold E. Schmidt, the DGfI has lost far more than a former president, long-time companion, colleague and friend. We are all painfully aware of the huge gap that his untimely death has left in our professional society in many different areas. An always vibrant, stimulating and inspiring force is now no longer part of our DGfI and we will do our best to do justice to Reinhold's ideas for the future and his aspirations for the importance of the DGfI beyond the biomedical community. His ideas and initiatives will continue to show us the way and we will continue to pursue his goals, such as additional training in immunology for doctors and the national and international promotion of young scientists, with all our strength.

Reinhold has left an unmistakable mark on our DGfI over the last four decades, not only as President in 2005/2006, but also as our representative at the European (EFIS) and International (IUIS) Association of Immunological

Societies, as a founding member of the Translational Immunology School (TIS) and, last but not least, with the realization of the additional training course in "Immunology" for medical professionals, which would never have come about without his tireless commitment. The next generation of immunologists was always a special concern of Reinhold's, and his decades of commitment to the Academy of Immunology were just as incomparable as his commitment to the 'Fachimmunologe DGfI' certificate.

In his many roles as a reviewer and review board member at the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), as well as Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), the German Rheumatism Research Center (DRFZ), the Paul Ehrlich Institute and on numerous national and international committees, Reinhold has put immunology, rheumatology, primary and acquired immunodeficiencies in clinical and research settings in the right light and represented these fields far beyond the boundaries of medicine. His contributions and activities at our DGfI annual conferences are unforgettable. Due to the Corona-related postponement of the joint annual conference with the Austrian Society for Allergology and Immunology (ÖGAI) to September 2022, we now have to organize this special annual conference without Reinhold Schmidt with a heavy heart and will join forces to organize it in his spirit.

Reinhold E. Schmidt - a life for immunology

After studying medicine at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn from 1970 to 1976, Reinhold Schmidt completed his doctorate there in 1976 under the supervision of the internist Prof. Dr. med. Stroehmann. He became interested in the mechanisms of rheumatic diseases as a young junior doctor at the Medical Clinic of the University of Bonn between 1977 and 1983, graduated as a specialist in internal medicine in 1983 and established his inimitable network at DGfI annual conferences in those early years. His interest in rheumatology led Reinhold to England for his postdoctoral training at the Rheumatology Unit of the Hammersmith Hospital of the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London.

The budding rheumatologist quickly realized that in order to understand rheumatic diseases, it would be essential to have the most detailed knowledge possible of the underlying immunological mechanisms. For his second postdoctoral period, he therefore chose the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard Medical School, in Boston, USA, which was already famous at the time, and from 1983 worked in the laboratory of Stuart F. Schlossman with Jerome Ritz, Ellis Reinherz and Richard P. MacDermott. There he established further contacts with young colleagues from Germany who had also acquired their immunological knowledge there - and so an increasingly dense professional network was formed, which proved to be sustainable and resilient over decades and was to become a cornerstone of the DGfI's development.

Reinhold's enthusiasm for natural killer cells (NK cells) originated in this inspiring environment of the Schlossman laboratory. Even then it was clear that these special cells of the innate immune system have a particularly complicated regulation. Using then new monoclonal antibodies against important receptors on human NK cells such as CD16 and CD56, which we now take for granted, Reinhold Schmidt was able to investigate NK cell subpopulations and cytotoxicity - also in the context of immunodeficiencies, autoimmune diseases and following the use of intravenous immunoglobulins (IVIg). This scientific interest in NK cells was to accompany him throughout his career and led him to pass it on to the next generation of immunologists in the NK Cell study group (AK).

Reinhold returned to Germany in 1985 as a C2 professor at the Hannover Medical School under the highly renowned rheumatologist Prof. Dr. med. H. Deicher, where he not only received his habilitation and *venia legendi*, but also his second specialist qualification in rheumatology in 1989. As a senior physician in the Department of Rheumatology, Reinhold gave clinical immunology a high national and international profile, particularly with his activities in our DGfI Clinical Immunology Working Group (AKKI). This period also saw the legendary 7th International Congress of Immunology in Berlin in 1989 - a particular challenge in the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall. As co-organizer and active protagonist for a bridge between basic and clinical immunology, Reinhold had a decisive influence on this conference. Reinhold Schmidt was also one of the formative participants at the first meeting of the Society for Natural Immunity in Taormina, Sicily, Italy - the birth of this international community of "afficionados" for NK cells, which was later expanded to include Innate Lymphoid Cells (ILCs). For some of us, especially members of the DGfI NK Cell Working Group from Hannover, Heidelberg, Munich, Freiburg and many other DGfI locations, it was the first international meeting with an inspiring and at the same time challenging Reinhold as a great scientific role model.

In addition to NK cells, his work also focused on congenital, so-called primary immunodeficiencies. With the discovery of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and AIDS, secondary immunodeficiencies were added, as was another specialist in infectiology. He has represented the topic of secondary immunodeficiencies at the German Center for Infection Research (DZIF), among others.

In Hanover, Reinhold was appointed C3 Professor and Director of the Clinic for Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology at the MHH in 1995 and W3 Professor and Director of the Clinic for Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology in 2007, where he headed the DFG-funded clinical research group KFO250 for many years. From this clinical leadership position, he also very successfully organized his DGfI presidency in 2005 and 2006 and, in the course of the European Conference of Immunology (ECI) 2006 in Paris, France, brought the next ECI conference to Berlin in 2009. The exhibition "Immunology in Germany", inspired by Reinhold Schmidt, was shown there for the first time, bringing the history of immunology, especially with the German contributions, to life in large-scale pictures. As treasurer of the European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS) and long-standing chairman of the Clinical Immunology Committee of the International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS), Reinhold not only represented our DGfI very successfully internationally for decades, but also represented it uniquely with his special dedication.

His special commitment to the next generation of immunologists was not only evident in the AKKI and AK NK cell working groups, but also in the establishment of the Hannover Biomedical Research School, HBRS, at the MHH, which unites all doctoral programs under one roof. For more than 15 years, he very successfully managed this school together with Reinhold Förster and made it a model for structured doctoral programs throughout Germany. Further milestones for immunology, such as the specialist immunologist qualification and, above all, the additional training course "Immunology for Physicians", would never have been realized without Reinhold Schmidt's tireless commitment. This is not the only place where we will continue his immunological legacy in his spirit.

His outstanding immunological achievements have been recognized in many ways, for example with the Rudolf Schoen Prize in 1992, the Jan Brod Prize in 1994, the Joachim Hilfenhaus Prize in 2007 and the Research Prize of the German AIDS Society in 2011. Since 2007, Reinhold Schmidt has been a member of Leopoldina, Germany's highest scientific society, where he has also successfully contributed his immunological expertise. Due to his tireless and extremely successful commitment to immunology, Reinhold Schmidt was made an honorary member of the DGfI at the 2017 annual meeting in Erlangen.

It is with the greatest respect and gratitude that we will remember Reinhold E. Schmidt as a role model, teacher, mentor, colleague and friend and keep him close to our hearts. We bow before this great colleague and will never forget him.

The DGfI Board

Christine Falk, Carsten Watzl, Reinhold Förster & Thomas Kamradt