

OBITUARY

PROF. DR. MED. WOLFGANG STILLE

July 7th, 1935 – May 6th, 2004

Professor Dr. med. Wolfgang Stille passed away on the 6th May 2004, shortly before his 69th birthday.

Professor Stille was born in Kassel on the 7th July 1935. He spent his childhood and adolescence near Bremen and started his medical studies in Marburg in 1955. After one semester he changed universities and continued to study at the university of Frankfurt, where he completed his medical studies. Furthermore, he spent an elective semester in Innsbruck.

During the first two years of his professional career he worked in different hospitals in Frankfurt and in the gynaecological department of Offenbach Hospital, where he also completed his doctoral thesis.

Wolfgang Stille worked for the university of Frankfurt from January 1962 until September 2000, including several working visits abroad. From the beginning, he had had a keen interest in research and treatment of infectious diseases. Very early in his career, he followed his predecessor Paul Christ by taking over responsibility for the infectious diseases laboratory. He developed it to become a distinguished research unit, where numerous scientific projects and publications originated from.

Soon, Wolfgang Stille had concentrated a group of young and interested colleagues around himself. He had acquired an excellent reputation as a clinical infectious diseases specialist in very little time. His advice was highly valued way beyond the University of Frankfurt. Wolfgang Stille possessed remarkable intuition and originality in research of new and evolving infections. As a young physician, he had contributed fundamentally to the discovery of Marburg-Virus infection, which causes a highly dangerous import disease. He was always interested in clarifying new or unknown diseases.

Numerous publications were either written or inspired by him, as for example the description of tick-associated meningo-encephalitis or research on staphylococcal toxic shock syndrome. The fact that AIDS was recognised in Frankfurt as early as 1982, is mainly a result of his work.

Wolfgang Stille had a broad interest in many medical areas, ranging from treating venomous snakebites and preventing health threats like smallpox, scabies and anthrax, up to toxicological problems and vaccina-

tion complications. He was always able to provide competent advice.

He achieved acclaim for his research on antibiotic substances, for which he created and evaluated therapeutic guidelines. As early as 1964, he and his colleague started working on a book, which was to become an uncomplicated reference for the treatment of infectious diseases. The first circulation of this standard reference in German speaking countries went into print shortly before he became Professor. The eleventh edition of this acknowledged book, which has crucially contributed to the quality standards of antibiotic therapy, is currently being prepared for publication.

In summer 1971, Wolfgang Stille received his habilitation for his work on septicaemia. A few years later he became Professor at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt and lead the infectious diseases department until his retirement. The infectious diseases group was very successful under his directorship. Numerous scientific papers, books and congress contributions were written. More than 200 scientists completed their doctoral thesis in his department. Five members of the group went on to become professors.

Wolfgang Stille was a proficient and committed academic mentor. He was committed to the education of medical students as well as younger colleagues, whose scientific projects he always supported.

His commitment to his patients was also exemplary. His diagnostic skills were outstanding. In case of unclear and life-threatening diseases, he was available for advice both day and night. His willingness to provide skills and knowledge to everybody approaching him - regardless of status - has fundamentally contributed to the reputation of his university. His dream was to pass on a well-equipped and uncompromised department. Unfortunately, he did not live to see its completion.

The Infectious Diseases Department team, all colleagues that were working with him and certainly a large number of patients deeply regret the loss of Wolfgang Stille.

Hans Reinhard Brodt

Norbert H. Brockmeyer

German AIDS Society