

## Obituary

### Dr med Uwe Bötel

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Dr med Uwe Bötel, born on 11th May 1938 in Kiel, passed away unexpectedly on 12th December 2002 of a myocardial infarction.

He obtained his doctorate in 1964 in Berlin. He specialized in surgery traumatology and later on physical medicine for rehabilitation. In 1974, he was elected director of the Department for Spinal Cord Injuries and Neurotraumatology of the 'Bergmannsheil' Hospital Bochum, University Hospital. He followed the basic principles of comprehensive treatment beginning on the day of accident under one roof by one physician through to reintegration into family, society and, if possible into professional life as laid down by Sir Ludwig Guttmann, but with one exception. He could not agree and accept the strict conservative treatment of the broken spine. His aims were early realignment and stabilization of the spine, restoration of the spinal canal, and decompression of the spinal cord in order to support the possible regeneration of neural structures, to facilitate nursing and care, to shorten the time of bedrest in order start self-training as early as possible and to shorten the time of hospitalization. By this he

intended to open a new way of care for sufferers from spinal cord lesions in Germany. He started in 1977 with 'dynamic spring instrumentation' described by Marian Weiss in 1975 and gave the first report on the results in 1980. In the following years, he used everything possible to improve diagnostic methods, knowledge, classification and techniques for surgical procedures. He gained a wide experience in this field. And he learned that 'only little can done in respect of the spinal cord'. He became nationally and internationally a renowned expert and was in demand as author, teacher and counsellor. He published many articles, presentations, lectures and took part in workshops as instructor in Germany and elsewhere. He was a pioneer of modern treatment in Germany. His interests included other conditions related to spinal cord injuries such as urology, pressure sores, spasticity, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychological and social problems. Under his directorship the center grew to become one of the leading institutions in Germany and worldwide. Everyone in his staff was accepted as a personality in his/her special field, patients included: altogether a real, ideal team.

Dr Bötel was a member of this society for many years. He was a founding member of the 'German Speaking Medical Society of Germany' (DMGP) and the 'German Society for Spine Surgery' (DGW). He was a member and medical officer of the 'Wheelchair Sports Club' Bochum and the 'German Wheelchair Sports Association' (DRS), and for many years he was a member of the Medical Committee of the 'International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation' (ISMGF).

He was a distinguished member of several public boards and an excellent adviser for governmental and nongovernmental institutions, legal and private insurances as well as for politicians.

Dr Bötel felt his profession as physician as a 'sacred duty', serving it with energy, highest standards and warm sympathy. He was a hard fighter in order to reach a specific goal, but modest and fair as a negotiating party. The history of care of spinal cord injuries in Germany cannot be written without mentioning what he did for this development, including treatment of high cervical lesions, arising in recent years.

His dedication was endless. Patients, colleagues, fellow doctors and co-workers will miss a friend, a person of confidence, his kindness, his cooperation, his

assistance, his talent and care. The patient's affection resulted, in 1999, in Dr Bötzel's decoration with Distinguished Service Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany. Everybody who had had the privilege to meet him will remember him with gratitude and with respect. They all will surely miss him.

In the short time he had for leisure he liked sailing, even on tall ships, and travelling round the world as much as possible. Dr Bötzel intended to retire in June

2003 and for years he prepared, with great enthusiasm and pleasure, his new home in the Black Forest. Regretfully, recreation and freedom were refused to him.

On behalf of so many people concerned, I would like to express our deepest sympathy for his wife and his two sons. We will never forget what he left.

FW Meinecke

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