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Laudatio for Professor Lunenfeld

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Laudatio for Professor Lunenfeld

Bruno Lunenfeld was born 1927 in Vienna, where he spent his youth until the age of 11 years. In 1938 his father was arrested by the Nazis, not only because he was a Jew, but because he served as legal counsel to the House of Habsburg and was considered a monarchist. The same year, Bruno Lunenfeld was brought to England with the help of the Jewish Agency. His striving for independence proved early on, as after a short time he fled from the youth camp spent two years at the well known school “Seafield Park” in England and made his way to Palestine. In the spring of 1940 – at the age of 13 – he travelled on a troop ship to Haifa to meet his parents there.

At the age of 15, he joined the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (a pre-state underground militia) and went to high school in Jerusalem and later to the British Institute of Engineering in Palestine. Encouraged by the Jewish Agency, Lunenfeld went to Switzerland in 1945 to study medicine. In Geneva, he met two scientists, who were formative for his life and his scientific career: Hubert de Watteville, director of the Women’s Hospital in Geneva – founder of the FIGO – who was supervisor for his doctoral thesis, and Rudi Borth, to whom Bruno Lunenfeld owes his interest in endocrinology and clinical medicine in general and especially in the conceptual development of statistical quality control in the laboratory.

In his doctoral thesis (1954) entitled “L’action isolée ou combinée des androgènes et œstrogènes chez la femme ménopausée” he should investigate a protein thought to be causing menopausal symptoms. As so often in the history of medicine and medical theses, this assumption was not quite right. However, what was found by Bruno Lunenfeld turned out as a major breakthrough in medicine. He found in the urine of postmenopausal women gonadotropins in high concentrations. The therapeutic implication of this finding was clear to Lunenfeld early on. Gonadotropins had already been used to treat amenorrhoea since the late 1930s, however only an extract of pregnant horse’s urine was available as a stimulatory compound and antibody formation to horse derived hCG impeded this therapeutic option. Lunenfeld soon became the driving force – with the help of the Vatican and catholic postmenopausal women – behind large scale urine collection and gonadotropin extraction: by cooperation with the company Serono, the drug Pergonal was “born” – the first human urine derived, commercially available gonadotropin preparation.

Lunenfeld later joined the Weizman Institute as senior Scientist till 1969, and then headed the Institute of Endocrinology at the Sheba Medical center from 1969–1992. Since then he is Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Life Sciences, Bar-Ilan University. His outstanding scientific career is best illustrated by his 400+ publications in refereed journals, 150+ reports, reviews & chapters in books and contribution as author or editor to 30+ books. Bruno Lunenfeld has always considered teaching and spreading knowledge as his primary mission, with the vision of allowing every couple to have their genetic child. He has thus trained numerous reproductive endocrinologists and supervised more than 50 doctorate theses. In line with this teaching commitment, Lunenfeld co-founded the Israel Endocrine Society in the 1950s and in 2002 founded the Asia-Pacific Initiative on Reproduction (ASPIRE). He now serves as President of the International Society for the Study of the Aging Male, General Secretary of The Asian-Pacific Initiative on Reproductive Endocrinology, Treasurer of the International Society of Gynaecological Endocrinology and Editor of *The Aging Male*, a journal devoted to men’s health and aging.

His persistent commitment, enthusiasm, and immense scientific productivity have shaped the face of modern day infertility treatment, in which gonadotropin stimulation remains an integral part. On a personal side, Bruno Lunenfeld is not only a warm family man with two sons and numerous grandchildren and two great grandchildren, but also an open hearted colleague, an esteemed intellectual conversationalist and close friend to countless people in the field. In 1995 he received the “Verdienstkreuz 1. Klasse” (German Government “Order of Distinction”) signed by the President, Roman Herzog. His greatest merit however – a merit that will live on through the generations – is the joy and happiness of millions of couples around the globe who with the help of gonadotropin therapy could become parents.

G. Griesinger, K. Diedrich

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