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## **In Memoriam Professor Peter M. Laurberg**

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## In Memoriam Professor Peter M. Laurberg

Professor and Chief Physician, DMSc Peter M. Laurberg, Aalborg, Denmark, has died aged 71 years.

Peter Laurberg was born in Aalborg, Denmark, just after the Second World War. After graduating from high school in 1964 he enrolled at the medical school of the Aarhus University and graduated in 1971. He then served as a sergeant in the Royal Danish Navy in 1972. After his initial clinical training at several departments of internal medicine at the Aarhus University Hospital, he started as research fellow at the Department of Medical Endocrinology in the same hospital. Here he laid the foundation for his impressive scientific career. In 1980 Peter defended his thesis entitled: 'Todeoxyronine release from the perfused canine thyroid' [1]. He became a specialist in internal medicine and medical endocrinology and subsequently returned to his home city, Aalborg, as Head of the Department of Endocrinology in March 1989. His wife and life-long companion Grete accompanied him and established her own specialist dermatology practice.

Peter was professor in internal medicine, first at Aarhus University, later at Aalborg University. From his early clinical days on, he was an excellent clinician and simultaneously managed to be the driving force in several research areas. In the early days of his clinical training he



*Professor Peter M. Laurberg*

met a colleague from Iceland, who became a good friend and with whom he entered a prosperous research collaboration studying the consequences of differences in iodine intake between Denmark and Iceland for the prevalence of various thyroid diseases [2]. These studies, as well as many of Peter's later publications, earned international recognition and praise and to this day influence guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of several thyroid conditions. One of Peter's pivotal achievements was heading the national iodine fortification programme, which, through his and the DanThyr group's relentless

efforts, led to the Danish Food Authorities implementing the programme in 2000 [3].

Peter was an impressive and much-loved tutor and mentor of many young researchers over four decades, resulting in excellent academic theses and his support of the personal careers of many a young researcher. He has often been described by them as an important role model and 'a father figure'. His endocrine research was not confined to the thyroid but spanned several other diseases, including pituitary conditions, where he was also considered an international expert.

International scientific organizations, from early in his career, utilized and became highly appreciative of Peter's dedication, focus, inspiration and knowledge as well as his hard work. Thus, he was an active participant in many committees and on the board of international scientific societies. He was highly visible as a teacher at international postgraduate courses, in particular in Eastern Europe, where he together with other international colleagues aimed not only to increase the level of expertise of specialists but also to establish improved contact and collaboration between different scientific cultures and traditions. He was a past President of the European Thyroid Association, from which he received several prizes for his research. His appointment as an honorary professor at China Medical University, Shenyang, bears witness of his international contacts, influence, and impact. The British Thyroid Association invited him to deliver the George Murray Lecture in 2007, and recently he has been appointed honorary member of the Danish Thyroid As-

sociation. Peter was thus an enormous initiator, an inspiring teacher and mentor for many colleagues. Simultaneously he was appreciated for his kind and inclusive personality, his great sense of humour and sound judgement as well as his enormous energy. Amazingly he managed to find enough time to become an excellent golf player and has always shown a keen interest in other cultures during his countless travels, very often accompanied by his wife Grete.

Tragically, and deeply ironically, Peter was killed by a car while visiting Tbilisi, Georgia, in connection with a teaching course. He was at the time taking an evening stroll with his wife. Our thoughts go to Grete, the 4 children, and their families, for whom the loss must be unbearable. We have lost a colleague and a cherished friend. We miss him and cannot comprehend the fact that he is no longer among us.

Professor *Ulla Feldt-Rasmussen*, Copenhagen

Professor *Stig Andersen*, Aalborg

Consultant *Inge Bülov*, Aalborg

Professor *Ástrádur B. Hreidarsson*, Reykjavik

Professor *Laszlo Hegedüs*, Odense

Professor *Jens Faber* and Consultant *Birte Nygaard*, Herlev

Head of Department *Hans Perrild*, Bispebjerg

Emerita Consultant *Karine Bech*, Birkerød

on behalf of the members of the Danish Thyroid Association, DanThyr, and the European Thyroid Association, as well as patients, friends and colleagues

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*Tbilisi, Saturday.* Peter delivers a brilliant lecture – as usual – on thyroid and pregnancy to an audience of over 300 endocrinologists from Georgia.

*Tbilisi, Sunday.* We have a marvellous day with Peter and his wife Grete, visiting the countryside of Georgia under the guidance of our host, Professor David Metreveli. The views, the friendship, the dark Georgian wine, everything is so pleasant. As it happens, we learn that Peter and Grete have many more grandchildren than we have, and a new one is coming. Peter tells me he likes black-and-white portraits better than coloured ones; they look more artistic in his opinion, and that is why he chose the black-and-white for the programme of the meeting.

*Tbilisi, Monday.* We are discovering the old town of Tbilisi on our own but meet by chance at the old castle. Peter buys my wife an ice cream. We agree to meet again at the Peace Bridge to have dinner together. Over dinner we talk about pressing and less pressing matters, including the future of the *European Thyroid Journal*. Then we

go back to our hotel, and Peter and Grete go out for a walk.

*Tbilisi, a Few Hours Later.* We are already deeply asleep when the phone rings. Could we come as soon as possible to the emergency department of the hospital? Peter has been hit by a car. When we arrive, Peter has been declared dead just ten minutes earlier.

*Tbilisi, Tuesday.* It is so sad to leave, to leave without Peter. Peter Laurberg was a very prominent member of the European Thyroid Association and its past President. He was one of the top clinical scientists in the thyroid field, and his many studies on thyroid and iodine and thyroid and pregnancy have attracted much attention worldwide. It was his idea to start the *European Thyroid Journal*, which was realized during his presidency. He served the journal very well as Associate Editor. His impact on the journal and on clinical thyroidology at large will be long-lasting.

Wilmar M. Wiersinga, Editor-in-Chief