

Willi Schulte

1929–2008

On December 4, 2008, Professor Emeritus Willi Schulte, Dr med dent, Dr hc, former head of the Department of Oral Surgery and Periodontology at the University of Tübingen, passed away, just 1 month before his 80th birthday.

Prof Schulte was born on January 3, 1929, in Hamm/Westfalen, Germany. He studied dentistry in Tübingen, where he also received his doctoral degree in 1953.

One of his major scientific interests was intraoral wound healing. In 1960 he published his well-known and commonly applied autohemotherapy filling with a stabilized clot for bony defects. The title of his habilitation in 1963 was "Retraction of the Blood Coagulum and Its Implications on Primary Healing of Bony Defects in the Jaws." As early as 1964, Prof Schulte had been working on laser-based preparation of dental hard tissue, another example for his innovative research. In 1969 he published the article "Centrifuged Auto-genous Blood for the Filling of Large Bone Defects—Modification of the Autogenous Blood Method." Clearly, he was several decades ahead of those who "invented" platelet-rich plasma techniques some years ago.

The functional disorders of the stomatognathic system were another major research area of Prof Schulte. In 1968 he developed the "Schulte Interceptor" followed by a physiotherapeutic concept for what was termed temporomandibular joint disorders at that time. His publications in this scientific field of activity meant turning away from the widespread mechanistic approach common at that time in favor of a holistic viewing of the stomatognathic system. Prof Schulte has been treating more than 20,000 patients with craniomandibular disorders (CMD) according to his graduated treatment scheme. He typically followed a systematic approach in combination with a clear didactical analysis, resulting in precise treatment recommendations.

He declined an appointment at the University of Aachen in 1970. Instead, he was appointed professor and head of the Department of Oral Surgery and



Periodontology at the University of Tübingen in 1972. In 1974 he introduced the "Tübingen Implant" made of aluminum oxide ceramic. A paradigm change resulted in a switch from the belief that dental implants are indicated only if the conventional prosthetic therapy fails to one that proposed an early implantation to retain the alveolar bone after dental extraction. In 1976 Prof Schulte developed the Periostest device together with his multicentric and interdisciplinary working group.

In 1983 he initiated the Collaborative Research Center "Implantology" (SFB 175, funded by the German Research Foundation [DFG]) at the University of Tübingen, the spokesman of which he had been from 1985 to 1996. In addition, he was elected dean of the Faculty of Medicine. Upon his initiative, the Priority Program "Clinical Surveillance and Further Advancement of Dental Implants" had been established at the Universities of Aachen, Berlin, Düsseldorf, and Mainz. It was because of him that the consensus conferences of 1990/1991 in Frankfurt/Main attempted to achieve a broad integration of scientific associations dealing with dental implantology in Germany. Although a complete integration of all associations was not achieved, the former Gesellschaft für Orale Implantologie (GOI) merged with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Implantologie (AGI) within the German Society of Dental, Oral and Craniomandibular Sciences (DGZMK), thereby founding the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Implantologie im Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferbereich (DGI; German Association of Implantology in Tooth, Mouth and Jaw Region).

Prof Schulte retired in 1995 and his students once again arranged a torch-lit procession for him. He received numerous honors and awards for his research activities. Three times he was awarded for the best research paper by the DGZMK. Among others, he received the golden badge of honor from the German Dental Association and the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. Also, he was honorary member of the medical

academy Carl-Gustav-Carus in Dresden as well as of the German and the Brazilian Association of Oral Implantology. After Brånemark and Schroeder, he became the third honorary member of the Academy of Osseointegration, one of the important global scientific organizations for dental implantology. In 2004, he received an honorary doctoral degree from the Faculty of Medicine at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz.

Prof Schulte's knowledge and authority are widely acknowledged. Generations of students were formed by his didactically and rhetorically excellent lessons. His national and international advanced training courses were extraordinarily successful and totaled approximately 500 courses altogether. All in all, he spent more than 1 year (!) in the rooms of the Academy of Advanced Dental Education in Karlsruhe.

As a scientist he was characterized by creativity in combination with the persistency to establish his innovative ideas by means of an admirable dedication. Prof Schulte authored and coauthored 290

publications. For Willi Schulte, science never was an end-in-itself goal; rather, all his basic research activities aimed to finally result in clinically applicable products or treatments. As a dedicated dental surgeon he treated a huge and highly satisfied patient community, sometimes consisting of several generations in one family. Some patients have received his services for over 30 years.

His scientific inspiration, his ambition, and his ethical attitude toward both colleagues and patients made him, the person Willi Schulte, a role model. He truly was an analytically viewing scientific visionary, who followed his goals persistently.

"Life is limited, but unlimited is memory." We join his wife, Dr Margret Schulte, and his children Anja and Dr Markus Schulte, in mourning the loss of Willi Schulte.

Bernd d'Hoedt, Mainz
Jörg Meyle, Gießen
German Gómez-Róman, Tübingen

