

Tribute to Heinz Stammberger (1946-2018)



It seems almost unbelievable to be writing about the loss of Heinz, who passed away completely unexpectedly on the 9th December 2018. Heinz has influenced so many careers that, like many of you reading this, it is hard to express how shocked I am by this sudden loss. To say that he had a major impact on ENT and specifically on rhinology would be a huge understatement. Without his supreme surgical skill, endless enthusiasm and superlative linguistic skills, chronic rhinosinusitis would have likely remained an unattractive clinical backwater and endoscopic sinus surgery would not have taken the world by storm.

He was an indefatigable teacher, running hundreds of dissection courses and lecturing throughout the world from the early 1980s right up to the last few weeks. He was President of innumerable international congresses and societies, was a founder of the Society of Minimally Invasive Therapy and his FESS courses run in German and English each year in his department in Graz, Austria were the go-to destinations for endoscopic endonasal techniques. He published widely and his first textbook, Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery in 1991 was the 'bible' for the technique. He was personally responsible for the introduction of extended endoscopic skull base surgery and many of the innovations that accompanied it, from fusion imaging to instrumentation and packing. Heinz was a true pioneer who was continually looking for new ways to enhance our knowledge and disease management.

It is no surprise that his pre-eminence was recognised with a plethora of honorary memberships to international and national ENT and rhinology societies, as well as honorary fellowships of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons of England, Edinburgh and the American College of Surgeons. He received multiple prizes and awards including the Georg Davey Howell from the University

of London, the ERS Award of Merit and the Cottle Golden Head Mirror.

But Heinz was much more than an inspirational doctor, surgeon and rhinologist – he was a true renaissance man, interested in everything from prehistoric rock art and archaeology to all aspects of the natural world, from geology to gastronomy, from philosophy to photography, from diving to deserts. He travelled to every continent, often with his lovely wife, Doloris who shared his many interests – I even managed to drag them up to Orkney, in the rain and windswept north of Scotland to visit Neolithic monuments. He was the perfect companion at so many meetings in far-flung parts of the world, displaying a wonderfully subtle sense of humour when things did not always go according to plan. He was simply one of the most interesting people I have known and who I have been deeply privileged to call my friend.

The world is a poorer place for his leaving it.

Valerie Lund