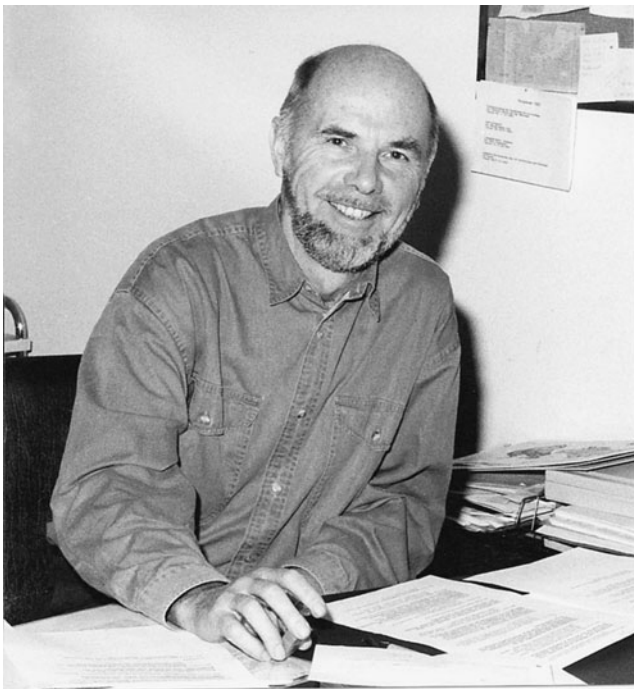


Obituary

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In memoriam Stefan Thierfelder

On February 28, 2010, Stefan Thierfelder passed away after a long debilitating disease at the age of 76. He was the head of the Institute of Immunology at the Helmholtz Zentrum München, a scientist and pioneer in the field of stem cell transplantation and antibody therapy.

The scientific track of Stefan Thierfelder started in Paris at the *Centre de Recherches sur les Maladies du Sang* under the guidance of Jean Dausset who became Nobel laureate for his work on HLA. HLA antigen disparity was found to be one of the causes of transfusion reactions, and Stefan Thierfelder was appointed to the position of a senior scientist

at the Gesellschaft für Strahlenforschung (GSF, today's Helmholtz Zentrum Muenchen) in 1965 for the study of platelet antibodies. However, in the scientific context of radiation research at the GSF, he devoted more and more time in the investigation of stem cell transplantation and the use of anti-lymphocyte antibodies for the prevention of rejection and graft-versus-host disease. During his time as head of the Division of Immunology, significant progress was achieved in immunogenetics with the definition of HLA class II antigens, in experimental stem cell transplantation, and in immune phenotyping of leukaemia. Depletion of T cells using specifically absorbed anti-thymocyte globulin and purging autologous marrow of residual leukaemia cells using antiglobulin against c-ALL antigen (CD10) were pioneered by him. He actively pursued translational programmes that were facilitated by the Haematologicum built on the Campus Großhadern of the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich close to the University Hospital. With his support, not only the first bone marrow transplantation in a child with severe aplastic anaemia was performed successfully, also new methods as T cell depletion and antibody purging could be introduced into the clinic. The same absorbed antiglobulins were helpful in characterising acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. Polyclonal sera were substituted by monoclonal antibodies; recently, the first bispecific antibody was licensed, which was developed by his collaborators. Symposia on Immunobiology in 1977 and 1980 as well as the Congress of the International Society for Experimental Hematology (ISEH) 1981 in Munich reflected his international reputation.

Stefan Thierfelder was a well-educated partner for discussions not only in science but also in literature, arts, social and political issues. He was open-minded and critical at the same time. As leader of a team, he cultivated the dialogue at any time and with everyone seriously concerned. His originality and open mind combined with critical judgement provided a creative atmosphere, supporting productivity and devotion of the members of the group. We gratefully acknowledge his support and remember him.

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