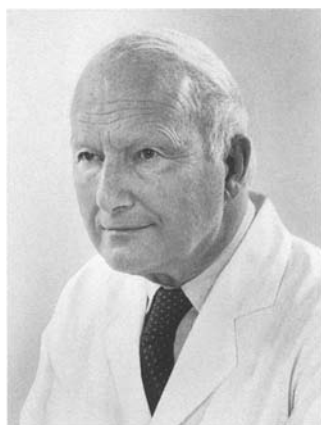




Obituary

Walter Andreas Fuchs



Walter Andreas Fuchs, born on 11 March 1929, Director of the Department of Medical Radiology at the University Hospital of Zurich, died unexpectedly on 6 November 1995 after a very short illness. The irony was that the announcements of his death appeared in the newspapers exactly 100 years after the discovery of X-rays by Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen. Born as the son of a protestant minister in Zurich, Fuchs went to the schools in Zurich, studied medicine at the University of Zurich and seized the opportunity to start training in radiology under the famous Hans-Rudolf Schinz at the same institution. From 1959 to 1961 he spent three years in Lund, Sweden, the Mecca of angiography at that time under the guidance of Olle Olsson. There he got married to his wife, Charlotte, a Swiss born and raised in South Africa. From Lund he returned to Switzerland and started his career at the University of Berne where he quickly moved up to become Professor of Radiology under Zuppinger and then his successor as Chairman of Radiology. In 1987 Fuchs was appointed Chairman of the Department of Medical Radiol-

ogy at the University of Zurich, a position which he held until 1994. With this he came to hold the chair of his first teacher Schinz. In the relatively short time from 1987 until his death he was able to build a very strong Department of Radiology which features the most modern medical imaging equipment, including echoplanar and interventional MR images and a PET centre.

There is no question that Walter Fuchs was the dominating figure in Swiss Radiology for the past 15 years. With an enormous dedication he shared both national and international radiology by actively investing his time in the board of the Swiss Society of Medical Radiology as well as General Secretary of the International Congress of Radiology (ICR) where his main concern was to support the use of appropriate radiology in third-world countries. He was elected honorary member to many national and international societies, most recently the RSNA. This honor filled him with particular pride, and he and his family prepared to receive this honor on 27 November 1995, a day he would not live to see.

Walter Fuchs had a strong character and a stern face, and people venturing upon him for the first time often were somewhat afraid of him, particularly the young residents. However, wherever a dialogue developed, the just, humane, caring and understanding character of his started to appear in a face of smiles and good humour.

His beliefs were deeply rooted in his "Zwinglian" upbringing in a protestant minister's household, and his students all remember his biblical quotations. Teaching young radiologists how to report on a radiological study he would often say "Just you say yes or no" (Matthew 5, 37). He also very much insisted in siding with people who made quick decisions to join him rather than going through lengthy evaluations of the pros and cons of a particular assign-

ment, very much as he had taken the jobs under Schinz and Olsson.

Walter Fuchs was a radiologist with vision and major abilities in convincing the government officials so important in providing the funds needed to invest in expensive technology. He was always straight and honest, supporting and guiding his trainees to professional positions best suited to their abilities. The same was true in his constant negotiations with the clinical disciplines, where he could convince his partner that he was not out to take on contested "turfs", but rather to find common grounds in true collaborative spirits. As he was a man sure of himself he was also able to share!

When he came to Zurich it was his declared goal to turn the department at the University Hospital again into one of the prime centres of European radiology as it had been under Schinz, unifying and bringing together radiology, nuclear medicine and radiation therapy again by emphasizing their common grounds rather than their differences. As such and due to his international outlook and experience, he measured the achievements of his department not only with the central European radiology departments, but maintained strong links to North American and also Asian departments of radiology. As an avid watcher of soccer games he often likened his department to a soccer team emphasizing his constant will to play an important role in the "World Championship" rather than just the "National Leagues".

Although the head coach has left us, we will continue to fulfil his visions and continue what he set out to achieve.

For the Department of Medical Radiology,
University Hospital of Zurich

Gustav K. von Schulthess

Zurich, December 1995