Blut (1986) 52: 197–198

Blut



*Obituary*

# Hermann Lehmann, M. D., Ph. D. CBE, FRS

Hermann Lehmann, born 8 July 1910 in Halle/Germany, died five days after his seventy fifth birthday on 13 July 1985 in Cambridge/England. With him, one of the most remarkable men of contemporary biochemical haematology passed away.

Having studied medicine in Freiburg, Frankfurt, Berlin and Heidelberg he underwent training in biochemistry, first (1934–1936) with Otto Meyerhof in Heidelberg, and afterwards, having left Germany because of the political situation, with F. G. Hopkins in Cambridge/England. For his further career, two influences were important: Coming to know the medical problems of the tropics by being installed as a medical officer in India and Uganda in the last years of and after the war, and the discovery by Pauling et al. 1949 of sickle-cell haemoglobin as the cause of sickle cell anaemia. As clinical pathologist in the Bartholomew's Hospital in London at that time he saw many blood specimens from such patients and was fascinated by the concept of "molecular disease". He engaged himself intensively to research in the rapidly expanding field of abnormal haemoglobins and became soon a world wide expert in that area. The secret of his success was the lucky combination of devoted hard work and critical use of methods in the laboratory with creative and imaginative power. Furthermore, he always showed a most generous attitude to help other workers in analysing haemoglobinopathies or to solve special problems. In this way he was host to many visiting researchers and received interesting blood specimens from all over the world; he acquired not only an unsurpassed experience but contributed decisively to the description and analysis of more abnormal haemoglobins than any other worker in this field. Nevertheless he always left the honour of the first author in the publications to those who saw the patients.

Searching for new haemoglobin variants and analysing them was, however, only the first step. His main interests were directed to the molecular and population genetics of the abnormal haemoglobins and their interaction with thalassaemia on the one side and the understanding of clinical and functional defects in haemoglobinopathies, concerning molecular stability, oxygen affinity or the Bohr effect, from the basic anomaly in the structure of the haemoglobin molecule. In these aspects, publications such as "Abnormal haemoglobins and the genetic code" (1965, together with D. Beale) and "Molecular pathology of human haemoglobins" (1968, together with M. F. Perutz),

both in "Nature", are classics. Over the years, many reviews on the field of haemoglobinopathies as well as contributions to books written by him provide a valuable insight into the progress of research and understanding. His books "Man's haemoglobins," published together with R. G. Huntsman (1966, 2nd edition 1974), and "Abnormal haemoglobins," published together with H. W. Carrell (1979), became standard works. The total of his publications surpasses 500.

Besides being elected Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Pathologists as well as Fellow of the Royal Society and of the Royal Society of Chemistry, the world-wide tribute to his merits is apparent in honorary memberships to numerous national haemotologic societies, in a number of prizes, on an Honorary Doctor of Medicine from the University of Frankfurt and Honorary Professor of the University of Freiburg, in being appointed Commander of the British Empire, and in being elected Corresponding Member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Member of the Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina. This latter gave him the opportunity to visit, after so many years, the place of his birth and of his schooling in Halle. More than all honours, however, weight the affection and admiration in the hearts of all those who had the luck to know this great man, to experience his liberal and cordial personality and to become his friend.

Klaus Betke