

Dr. Karoly M. Gefferth (1901–1992)

B. Lombay

Department of Pediatric Radiology, Borsod County Teaching Hospital, Institute of Radiology, Szentpeteri kapu 72–76, H-3501 Miskolc, Hungary

Radiology in Hungary and in Europe lost one of its greatest personalities on 29 August 1992.

Dr. Karoly Gefferth, one of the pioneers of pediatric radiology, was the son of a rural general practitioner skilled in obstetrics, ophthalmology and minor surgery. The passionate interest shown by his father in the development and advancement of medicine, and the care and concern for all his patients symbolised the professional integrity of the doctor.

After graduating from Budapest's Pázmány Péter University with a medical degree in 1924 Gefferth worked in a number of hospitals, both at home and abroad, before taking up a post at the Budapest Hospital for Sick Children in 1930. There, in cooperation with the University Department of Pediatrics, he became the hospital's first full-time pediatric radiologist. He worked there until his retirement in 1971.

His early training in radiology was in Cologne with Professor Teschendorf. He continued his training in Hungary with Professor B. Kelen, known for his achievements concerning the elementary nature of X-rays, and with Professor Ratkóczy, a renowned expert in diagnostic radiology. By 1933 Gefferth had become an acknowledged radiologist in his own right, spending his first years at the Hospital for Sick Children under Professor P. Mészöly, who was regarded by many as one of the founding fathers of radiology.

In 1948 Gefferth earned his university lectureship with his thesis "X-ray therapy in infants and children", and later he was awarded the State Higher Scientific Degree for his dissertation "Roentgen diagnosis of pneumonia in infants". On the same theme he published a monograph in German entitled "Roentgendiagnostik der Säuglingspneumonien" (Akadémia Kiadó, 1962). His interests and abilities covered almost the whole spectrum of pediatric

radiology and he was the author of numerous publications chiefly in Hungarian and German medical journals.

Having noted the shortcomings of the procedure for imaging the mastoid in adults, he developed a simpler method for infants which is still widely employed in eastern Europe: He also drew attention to a relationship between the developmental variants of the bones of the hand and leukemia in children [*Strahlentherapie* (1968) 135:670 and (1969) 137:442]. His comprehensive knowledge of X-ray films of the hand enabled him to assess the metric development of the short tubular bones from birth to late puberty [*Acta Paediatrica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (1972) 13:117]. In a series of articles he also concerned himself with the growing skull, in particular with the assessment of the growth of the neurocranium, the face and the dynamic of growth [*Acta Paediatrica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (1967) 8:231, (1976) 17:43 and (1984) 25:59].

Karoly Gefferth was an honorary member of the European Society of Pediatric Radiology, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Kinderradiologie and the Hungarian Roentgen Society. He was also honoured as one of the pioneers of pediatric medicine by the *European Journal of Pediatrics* [(1988) 148:1–2].

As honorary president Gefferth opened the 29th ESPR Congress in Budapest on 29 April 1992. In the last days of his life he completed a chapter on the history of Hungarian pediatric radiology for the book "*History of pediatric radiology in Europe*". He is survived by his beloved wife, his sons, his daughter and his grandchildren, several of whom followed him into medical and teaching careers.

To honour his memory the Hungarian Pediatric Radiology Section will establish the Gefferth Prize for achievements in pediatric radiology in Hungary.