

Leo Clodius

Jiri Smahel, 1925–2000

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Jiri Smahel (1) was born in 1925 in what was called, at that time, the “CSSR”. In 1950 he received his M.D. degree in Prague. Smahel was never a member of the communist party. Nevertheless, due to his respected knowledge and his position in the scientific community, he was offered a Chair and Professorship in the Histology and Embryology Department of the centuries-old Karl’s University in Prague. In 1965, he preferred to become the Director of the Research Department of the Second Sur-

gical Clinic of Zurich University Hospital. His main interest, as demonstrated by multiple papers on the subject, was the revascularization of grafted skin of varying origins and thickness. His dissertations included valuable information on the revascularization of skin appendices and of skin flaps, the role of vascularity in the healing of skin and subcutaneous tissues, silicones and tissue reactions, and fatty tissues. With the advent of microsurgery, he organized the necessary training facilities in his own laboratory.

Both before and after his retirement in 1990, calling himself a theoretician, Smahel was always ready and happy to discuss the “crazy ideas” of clinical plastic surgeons. His enormous scientific knowledge brought our plastic surgery imaginations back to reality, thus enabling us to make our ideas useful in clinical practice. Together, from ignorance to progress, we loved to cross traditional boundaries, for example, on the subject of hairless hair grafting [1] – knowing full well that in an orthodox university set-up scientific tradition breakers are not liked by many. However, immersed in science, Smahel was always a winner: going through the problem instead of around it; making scientific commitments, not promises; not only admitting failures, but explaining them. He loved clinicians enough to warn us of possible errors.

We will not forget Jiri Smahel's striving ambitions, his restless search for the advancement of our speciality. Today, he is but a handful of ashes. Today, we mourn him and miss him, but his spirit lives on. From the depths of our full hearts we can only say: Thank you!

References

1. Clodius L, Smahel J (1979) Resurfacing denuded areas of the beard with full-thickness scalp grafts. *Br J Plast Surg* 32:295–299

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