

## Obituary Prof. Ulrich Vogel, MD 1964–2022: a scientific mentor and expert in infection prevention and control

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With great sadness we write on the passing of our colleague, mentor and friend Prof. Ulrich Vogel, MD who died after a serious illness on October 4, 2022.

Ulrich Vogel had started his career as a microbiologist at our institute in 1991 as a physician trainee. He moved to Hannover Medical School as a research assistant before returning to IHM in 1996 with the appointment of Matthias Frosch from Hannover to Würzburg.

Ulrich Vogel was a world-renowned expert in the molecular biology and epidemiology of *Neisseria meningitidis*, one of the most important agents of bacterial meningitis. Most recently as its director, he was instrumental in the successful operation of the National Reference Center for Meningococci (and later additionally for *Haemophilus influenzae*) and was a pioneer in sequence-based epidemiological analysis of infectious agents [1]. His scientific work also yielded important contributions to the role of the complement system in the immune response against meningococcal infections. He was able to exemplify the difficulties in the development of a meningococcal vaccine due to rapid antigenic variability

by describing a rapid serogroup change of meningococci during infection of a young woman, an observation he published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2000 [2]. Ulrich Vogel also contributed his expertise in molecular biology and epidemiology of meningococci to the evaluation of vaccines and one of the antigens used in the current serogroup B meningococcal vaccine was functionally characterized with the participation of Ulrich Vogel [3].

Internationally, he played a leading role in the establishment of the European Meningococcal and Haemophilus Disease Society (EMGM) together with Matthias Frosch. He served this international society as president from 2011 to 2019. Ulrich Vogel has also held key positions in our national society, the German Society for Hygiene and Microbiology, as coordinator of the Working Group for Reference Centers and Consiliary Laboratories and as spokesperson for the specialist groups.

In 2008, Ulrich Vogel was appointed as head of hospital hygiene at the University Hospital of Würzburg and subsequently took over the management of the Hospital Hygiene Unit. Ulrich Vogel dedicated himself to this new task with heart and mind. Within a very short time, he was widely accepted and appreciated as a highly competent expert in hospital hygiene who was always looking for pragmatic solutions. During this time, he extended his scientific interest to hospital hygiene issues. A study under his leadership on the typing of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) strains has been cited well over 1000 times to date [4]. Ulrich Vogel played a major role in establishing an antimicrobial stewardship program at Würzburg University Hospital. It is to his credit that hospital hygiene at the University Hospital meets the highest standards, thus ensuring a high level of safety for patients.

His last major professional challenge was the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Ulrich's contribution to the successful

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handling of this millennial task by our University Hospital, but also by the entire medical faculty, cannot be praised too high. In addition to his professional responsibility, he was tirelessly willing to help in other places—he participated in the creation of hygiene concepts for "Fastnacht in Franken", he advised colleagues from all over the university on how to deal with COVID-19, and he was involved in the fight against COVID-19 outbreaks in old people's and nursing homes. Without Ulrich Vogel, much of what was crucial to the management of COVID-19 in Würzburg would have been more difficult or even impossible.

With all these scientific and clinical merits, we remember above all Ulrich Vogel as a person: a pronounced sense of justice and the unconditional will to find solutions that bring added value for all sides distinguished him at all times. Very few people with such abilities and merits put themselves so little in the spotlight as he always did.

Anyone who needed good advice was always in the right place with Ulrich. It was important to him to support young colleagues at all times and to help them move forward on their scientific or clinical career path. Ulrich appreciated music and art, and those who were still at the institute at a late hour could experience him singing or humming a song while he was finishing some final work.

It was an honor and a privilege to have Ulrich Vogel as a colleague and we will miss him. Our thoughts are with his wife and family, with whom we mourn together.

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