



## Goodbye to a great clinician, scientist and role model: Winfried Graninger (1956–2023)

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The Austrian and International Rheumatology World is deeply saddened by the loss of Winfried Graninger on 30 May 2023. Professor Graninger became the first chairman of the newly founded Division of Rheumatology at the University of Graz in 2003, a position that he held for 18 years and that he used to shape the world of rheumatology in many respects.

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Born in 1956 in Salzburg, Winfried Graninger graduated from the Medical School at the University of Vienna and subsequently started his training in internal medicine at the University's 2nd Department of Medicine under Georg Geyer. Originally interested in diabetology, he attended a lecture on systemic lupus erythematosus by Alfred D. Steinberg from the Arthritis Institute at NIH who was thrilled by his questions and remarks during the discussion session, suggesting to him to focus on rheumatology which he subsequently did, thus becoming the first trainee and fellow in rheumatology at the department's rheumatology unit, even long before that specialty was inaugurated in Austria. Upon suggestion by his mentor, he undertook a research fellowship in molecular biology with Stanley Korsmeyer, a former fellow of Phil Leder and Tom Waldman, at NIH and University of Washington St. Louis from 1985 to 1987. Publications in *J. Exp Med*, *PNAS* and *JCI*, top journals of that time next to *Nature* and *Science*, witness the scientific successes of his fellowship.

Back in Vienna he was the first in Austria, if not the German speaking countries, to introduce molecular techniques into rheumatology research and mentored a number of young physician scientists, such as Martin Aringer, Ludwig Erlacher, Hans Kiener and Markus Köller. He was heavily involved in planning the research laboratories of the emerging Division of Rheumatology at the new Vienna General Hospital and was instrumental in moving the laboratories and the whole research group from the old to the new hospital in the middle of the 1990s. Numerous publications on clinical and basic aspects of rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus and osteoarthritis were the results of his scientific dedication in Vienna and Graz and appeared in the best journals of the field.

Professor Graninger served as President of the Austrian Society of Rheumatology and Rehabilitation from 2007 to 2008, as President of the Styrian Society of Physicians from 2012 to 2014 and as a member of the Board of the Austrian Society of Allergology and Immunology. In addition, he participated in several international task forces and EULAR's scientific committee, thus further enlightening the evolution of modern rheumatology by his broad expertise and communication skills. Moreover, he was one of the chief editors of *Zeitschrift für Rheumatologie* from 2004 to 2020 and editor of the journal *Universum Innere Medizin* from 2003 to 2017. All these activities unveiled his excellence in and life-long devotion to advancing the field of rheumatology.

Winfried Graninger was not only an outstanding clinician with a great dedication to patient care and exceptional abilities in the interaction with his patients, but also a role model for interaction with his co-workers, supporting their development in whichever way he could and thus mentoring many of them into great success. Yet another one of his big talents was his teaching ability; presenting complex issues in a lively, stimulating manner made him a widely demanded speaker at national and international conferences, and all this was spiced with a great sense of humour. In line with this capacity, he organized many courses, such as courses on sonography and infiltration techniques at the Medical University of Graz which were attended by numerous participants, teaching them new procedures and thus advancing their skills to the state of the art.

His wit and his devotion to teaching conveying his special and general knowledge were not hampered even when his ailment which impacted his mobility and ultimately also speaking capacity, but never his splendid thinking, became apparent, deteriorated and ultimately led to his demise.

When he held his farewell lecture at the end of July 2021 he not only looked back at the achievements of the Division of Rheumatology at the Medical University of Graz, congratulating and thanking his numerous co-workers for their support and accomplishments, but also cited a cleaning person from a non-German speaking country who once said about his situation: "I have happy". With these words he implied that he also was happy with all the advancements that he could realize during his long term of office, including the most recent incorporation of an immunology laboratory into his division which was subsequently named "Division of Rheumatology and Immunology", an evolution that will be attached to his name just like the fact that he was the first chairman of rheumatology in Graz. He ended his farewell lecture with the words: "Dear friends, ... stay healthy!"

Winfried Graninger who has impacted rheumatology so importantly will not be forgotten by his mentees and his friends. His thoughtfulness, his smile and the imprints that he made on all of us continue to live in our minds.

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