



In memoriam Univ. Prof. Dr. Karl Heinz Tragl (1936–2023)

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The College of Physicians in Vienna mourns the loss of Professor Karl Heinz Tragl, MD, Senator and President of the Society from 2007 to 2011, who passed away on 25 December 2023.

Karl Heinz Tragl was born on 22 April 1936, in Wiesen, Burgenland. He studied medicine in Vienna and completed his doctorate in 1961 at the University of Vienna. He underwent internal medicine training at the 1st Medical University Clinic in Vienna, headed by Ernst Lauda and Erwin Deutsch. Karl Heinz Tragl focused his scientific work on endocrinology and metabolism. After a sabbatical at Stanford University in California, he habilitated in 1976 in the field of internal medicine, specifically on the molecular biological effects of insulin on protein synthesis. In 1977 Karl Heinz Tragl was appointed head of the 1st Medical Department of the Kaiser Franz Josef Hospital in Vienna,

a position he held until 1992. During this time, he was tasked by the City of Vienna with planning the new Donauspital at the Sozialmedizinisches Zentrum Ost (Donau Hospital at the Social Medical Center East) in Vienna. After its opening in 1992, he became chair of its 1st Medical Department and medical director of the hospital. In 1988, Karl Heinz Tragl had already taken over the leadership of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Aging Research, founded by Karl Fellingner. At this institute, he initiated the Vienna-Transdanube Aging (VITA) study, a unique prospective, interdisciplinary population-based study on the frequency and nature of risk factors of Alzheimer's disease, as well as changes in biomarkers of this devastating disease. Collaborating with representatives from various disciplines at the Donauspital and abroad, he laid the groundwork for the early diagnosis, prevention, and early treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Karl Heinz Tragl retired in 2003.

It is only through incredible dedication and extraordinary diligence that he found time to write numerous books alongside his roles as a doctor, researcher and hospital manager. These include a handbook of geriatric medicine, on surgery in the aged and on falls in old age, two books on the establishment and initial years of operation of the Donauspital, the latter co-authored by Walter Reinagl, and one book on the history of tuberculosis care in Vienna. Last but not least, we are indebted to him for two important chronicles: one on Vienna's numerous hospitals in the city's past and the history of the College of Physicians in Vienna since 1837.

Karl Heinz Tragl not only substantially contributed to Vienna's hospital system but also the College of Physicians in Vienna, of which he was a regular member since 1967. He played a significant role in developing and transforming the society into an independent medical organization and one of the most

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important institutions for medical education in Austria. In 1986, he assumed the role of the treasurer, which he carried out with foresight and care until his election as the College President in 2007. During this time, e-learning and electronic literature services were expanded, and under his presidency, access was provided for other federal states such as Tyrol and Vorarlberg. He opened the Billrothhaus (the headquarters of the College of Physicians in Vienna) for the “Open Medical Institute” of the American-Austrian Foundation, as a meeting place for invited doctors from third-world countries within the framework of medical education. In recognition of his services to the College of Physicians in Vienna, he was awarded the Billroth Medal in 2006. Previously he had received the Great Golden Medal of Honor from the City of Vienna in

2002 and in 2010 the Commander’s Cross of the State of Burgenland.

We will remember Karl Heinz Tragl not only as an exemplary doctor and researcher, a determined organizer in and of the healthcare system of Vienna, and a forceful treasurer and president of the College of Physicians in Vienna. We will remember him as a role model for a constant effort towards each individual, for respectful interaction between people, and as someone who wholeheartedly engaged in his convictions.

Our condolences go out to his wife and family.

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