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Dr. Emilio Kyburz-Haerdi

26 February 1928 – 20 July 2005



Education and Studies of Chemistry at ETH Zurich

Emilio was born in Milano, where he enjoyed eight years in the local Swiss School. Later, he finished his education in Aarau and started his studies at the ETH in Zurich in autumn 1947. Emilio finished his thesis in the laboratory of Prof. V. Prelog in 1954 with his work on the Veratrum Alkaloid Cevin. He stayed for additional two years at the ETH and was involved in the isolation of antibiotics from *actinomycetes*.

A Life-long Commitment to Pharmaceutical and Medicinal Chemistry

Research at Hoffmann-La Roche, Basel

Emilio joined Roche Pharma Research on July 1st, 1957. In his first year he contributed to the synthesis of the antibiotic cycloserine working in the team of A. Fürst. About one year later, Emilio joined the project group 'Psycho-Neuropharmaceutics' headed by J. Hellerbach. Emilio became fascinated by central nervous system research and remained true to this field during his entire career at Hoffmann-La Roche. His research focused on antidepressive, antipsychotic, anxiolytic, and nootropic compounds. In 1970, Emilio was nominated group leader and procurist, in 1979 vice-director of research. During 1975 to 1985, Emilio was group leader for

research on antidepressants in PF1 (Pharma Forschung 1) under the leadership of W. Haefeli, G. Haeusler, and K. Bernauer. In 1980, the benzodiazepine antagonist Anexate® (RO0151788) was identified in his research group. During 1986 to 1993 Emilio was member of the departments PF/CNS and PRPN headed by W. Haefeli and R. Imhof and later Q. Branca until his retirement March 1st, 1993. Emilio maintained an intense network of scientific connections inside and outside the Roche company. Thus, he has been the ideal person to initiate the foundation of a local medicinal chemistry organization in Switzerland and to establish strong ties with international organizations all over the world.

Presence and Activities in National and International Organizations

Emilio was one of the key persons engaged in the foundation of the *Division for Medicinal Chemistry (DMC) of the Swiss Chemical Society (SCS)*.

The DMC was started by an initiative of chemists from the pharmaceutical industry (A. Kaiser, J. Kalvoda, F. Kunz, E. Kyburz, M. Montavon, and U. Renner), who met in January 1984 at Hoffmann-La Roche and discussed the foundation of a Medicinal Chemistry Section within SCS. This initiative was endorsed by K. Heusler, the president of the SCS at that time. The SCS Executive Committee nominated a working group composed of F. Kunz (chairman), E. Kyburz (secretary), J. Kalvoda, and A. Vasella. In April 1986 a Declaration

of Intent was drawn up and in autumn of 1987 a modification of the regulations of the SCS finally paved the way for official establishment of the DMC. As first task a joint meeting with the GDCh in Freiburg im Breisgau was organized in October 1987 attracting 350 participants. In the same year the DMC obtained the membership of the European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry (EFMC) and was invited to organize the XIIth International Symposium on Medicinal Chemistry 1992 in Basel. In 1988 a committee consisting of E. Kyburz (chairman), J. Kalvoda (treasurer), R. Giger (secretary), J.-L. Fauchère, D. Hauser, B. Testa, and W.-D. Woggon started to enroll members for the DMC. At the Autumn Meeting of the SCS 1988 the first session on Medicinal Chemistry was organized by the DMC with plenary lectures by J.-L. Fauchère and R.H. Abeles, at the Autumn Meeting 1989 with plenary lectures by C.R. Ganellin and B. Testa.

The official foundation of the DMC took place on May 16, 1990 on the occasion of the First Annual Meeting of the DMC at Hoffmann-La Roche, Basel, with a panel discussion on 'Medicinal Chemistry in the Present and in the Future'. The discussion was moderated by Alfred Pletscher, panel members were Albert Eschenmoser, Bernard Testa, Stephan Guttman, Dieter Hinzen, Jakob Nüesch, Emilio Kyburz, and H.-P. Schreiber. In September 1990 the members of DMC elected the Executive Committee for the two-year period 1991–1992. Emilio was elected as Chairman and

was again re-elected for the (newly established) three-year period of 1993 to 1995.

Emilio was Head of the Organizing Committee and Bernard Testa Head of the Scientific Committee for the XIIth International Symposium on Medicinal Chemistry in September 1992 in Basel, a symposium which was attended by more than 1200 scientists. Proceedings were published as a book 'Perspectives in Medicinal Chemistry' in VC/HCA, 1993.

Emilio was the driving force in the organization of the First Joint French-Swiss Meeting on Medicinal Chemistry in September 1993 in Dijon (210 participants) and of the First Italian-Swiss Meeting on Medicinal Chemistry in September 1997 in Turin (330 participants).

Together with B. Testa and H. van de Waterbeemd, Emilio proposed the creation of the Swiss Courses on Medicinal Chemistry, which have been held biennially in Leysin since 1994 and offer about 70 young scientists a broad overview of disciplines involved in modern preclinical drug research, a course specifically designed for colleagues with a few years experience in the pharmaceutical industry and interested Ph.D. students. Currently Professors G. Folkers and B. Ernst are preparing for the 7th Swiss Course in October 2006.

Emilio was a highly respected medicinal chemist at the international level. He was elected *President of the European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry (EFMC)* for the period of 1993 to 1994, and continued to serve the EFMC as secretary until end of 2000. He strengthened the ties to the Division of Medicinal Chemistry of the American Chemical Society and organized half-

day EFMC sessions at the 218th and 221st ACS National Meetings in August 1999 in New Orleans and in April 2001 in San Diego, respectively. He established close ties with the Asian Federation for Medicinal Chemistry founded in 1992, which is organized similar to the EFMC. In particular, the president of the AFMC Naofumi Koga (Daiichi Pharmaceuticals) highly appreciated advice given by Emilio.

In 1996 Emilio became observer of the IUPAC Division of Chemistry on Human Health and served as 'associate member' during the periods of 1998–1999 and 2000–2001. He was member of the organizing committee of the 36th IUPAC Congress in Geneva, in August 1997.

The Division for Medicinal Chemistry of the Swiss Chemical Society counts at present 630 members.

The colleagues in Hoffmann-La Roche and the members of the Division for Medicinal Chemistry will honor the memory of Emilio Kyburz.

Basel, August 12, 2005

René Imhof (Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd., Head of Pharma Research Basel),

Hans Peter Märki (Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd., Basel, President of the Division for Medicinal Chemistry of the Swiss Chemical Society),

Wolfgang Froestl (Novartis Pharma AG, Basel, Past-President of the Division for Medicinal Chemistry of the Swiss Chemical Society),

Walter Hunkeler (Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd., Basel, retired).