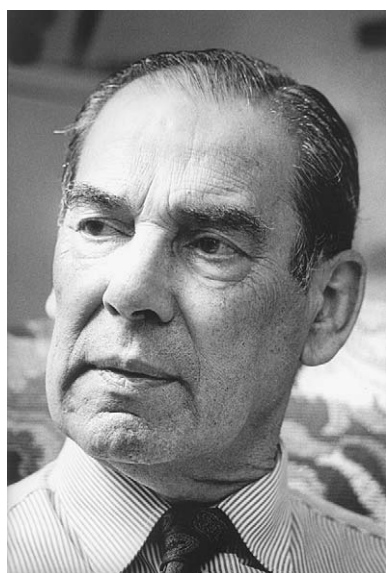


Obituary

DAVID DE WIED 1925–2004

We are sad to report that David de Wied, founder of the European Journal of Pharmacology, died on 21 February 2004.



David de Wied was born in Deventer, The Netherlands, on January 12, 1925. During the German occupation in 1940–1945, the Nazis forced him into hiding. His formal education had to be postponed until after the war. When able to return to school he quickly finished high school and enrolled in the medical training program of Groningen University. David de Wied completed his PhD thesis on “The role of ascorbic acid in adaptation to cold temperature” and obtained his MD in 1955.

In 1957–1958, he collaborated with Arthur Mirsky at the Department of Clinical Science of the University of Pittsburgh. While there, De Wied became interested in the role of the pituitary–adrenal system in behaviour. Together with the experimental psychologist Robert Miller he studied the influence of corticosteroids and ACTH on avoidance learning using rats. They found that glucocorticoids had the opposite effect to that of ACTH on the perseveration of a learned avoidance task. This finding marked the beginning of a scientific interest in peptide hormones and behaviour, an interest that never changed in its intensity. In 1958 he

was appointed as associate professor and in 1961 as full professor in Experimental Endocrinology at Groningen University.

In 1963, David de Wied was appointed a full professor in Pharmacology at Utrecht University, where he had the opportunity to start a large and multidisciplinary research program on the influence of peptide hormones such as ACTH, MSH and vasopressin on brain and behaviour. The discovery that a fragment of the ACTH/MSH molecule, consisting of only a few amino acids, displayed full behavioural activity—but was without effect on the endocrine system—led him to the concept that pituitary hormones had a CNS activity that was not mediated by the peripheral endocrinon. From these experiments De Wied concluded that hypophyseal hormones—circulating or produced in the brain—might act as precursors for behaviourally active peptides and this led him to designate the CNS-active peptides as ‘neuropeptides’. His neuropeptide concept has inspired generations of young pharmacologists and neuroscientists all over the world. He tutored 86 PhD students and over the years he hosted over 200 visiting scientists in Utrecht.

In 1968, on the initiative of David De Wied, the Department of Pharmacology was renamed the “Rudolf Magnus Institute of Pharmacology”, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the first academic Chair for Pharmacology in The Netherlands. Rudolf Magnus was the famous German pharmacologist who, while at Utrecht University in the beginning of the 20th century, pioneered what is now known as the field of Neuropharmacology.

In 1965, the Director of the North-Holland Publishing, which later became part of Elsevier, approached De Wied to become the editor of a new pharmacological journal. After considerable deliberation, he accepted this invitation in 1966. One year later, in January 1967, the first issue of “The European Journal of Pharmacology” was launched. Under his stimulating leadership, the journal soon became a leading publication in the pharmacological sciences. His main goals for the journal were to publish only high quality research papers that were clearly presented to the readers. To this end, the journal provided language editing as to facilitate the submission of papers from scientists from non-English speaking countries like Japan and Eastern Europe. This service appeared to be very successful. In 1995, David de Wied retired as

chairman of the board of editors but continued as an Honorary Editor.

For his scientific endeavours De Wied received many international and national prizes, royal commendations and honorary degrees from many Universities. His passing is a great loss to the European Journal of Pharmacology and to the world's scientific community. His life can be seen as a striking demonstration of how great accomplishments can be made by a dedicated, intelligent person despite the hardship of his youth. To all scientists he was a model of integrity and dedication. To his friends he was a model of loyalty.

Utrecht,
Willem Hendrik Gispen
Jacques Bruinvels
Frans Nijkamp
Dirk Versteeg
Ferdie Engels

Amsterdam,
Joke Jaarsma