In Memoriam

Rudolf Preussmann
Honorary Member of EACR since 1994

Rudolf Preussmann passed away in Heidelberg on November 7, 2012, at the age of 84. He succumbed, several painful months after diagnosis, to the disease he was most successful in mitigating workers exposure at specific working places in the metal, chemical and rubber industry. His group also supported many colleagues by supplying them with carcinogenic NOC, thus stimulating systematic research on chemical carcinogenesis worldwide. In recognition of his great expertise, Rudolf Preussmann served in many scientific committees, and was an important governmental adviser. He was frequently asked as an expert by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in Lyon, the German Science Foundation (DFG), and for many years also the Expert Council of the Ministry of the Environment of the Federal Republic of Germany. He was elected as Chairman of the Scientific Council of the DFKFZ (1977 - 1980) and of the AEX, the Experimental Branch of the German Cancer Society (1984/85). His outstanding achievements were particularly appreciated by the Federal Cross of Merit (1981) and the German Cancer Award (1992).

Rudolf Preussmann will be commemorated as a personality of integrity and high standing. Although he acted as a prime inter pares in his international research team, he enjoyed an unquestioned authority. He encouraged many students and colleagues, and greatly supported guest scientists from abroad, inside and outside the laboratory. He was not only a great scientist but also an amiable colleague with broad cultural interests beyond the laboratory. He was a lover of poetry, literature, and music, particularly opera music, and an excellent photographer. He loved walking and cycling, not only to maintain his health but also to keep fit but also to enjoy the beauties of nature. He was fortunate to remain in the good hands of his wife and family until the end.

Peter Bannasch and Gerhard Eisenbrand

Professor Robert Baldwin
1927 – 2012

It was with sadness that the scientific community received the news that Robert Baldwin had passed away on 30th June 2012 following a brief illness. Robert (Bob) Baldwin will be remembered for his immense contribution to the field of cancer immunology and as one of the founding editors of this journal. He was born in Huddersfield in Yorkshire and grew up in Derby where he excelled academically at school and on the sports field. He attended Birmingham University where he obtained a first class degree in biochemistry and his doctorate subsequently gaining a scholarship to work in Philadelphia on immunity to tuberculosis. He returned to Nottingham in the 1950’s to establish a cancer research laboratory at the University and became Professor of Tumour Biology. Director of the Cancer Research Campaign Laboratories and was awarded a prestigious lifelong Gibbs Fellow of the then U.K. Cancer Research Campaign.

In 1955 Bob published the first ever research reports on immunity in cancer in the British Journal of Cancer. These two seminal works laid the foundation for the development of the subject and the establishment of a world-renowned laboratory at Nottingham. During his career, Bob published more than one thousand research papers as principle or co-author and in the 1970’s and 80’s more than 60 research staff were engaged in developing the fundamental principles of cancer immunity (using rodent and human models) and translating these findings into the clinic in early clinical trials initially using BCG as an adjuvant. Our knowledge of ‘tumour-specific antigens’ owes much to his endeavours and work conducted in his laboratory, initially using Diethylnitrosamine-induced rat hepatomas and MCA-induced rat sarcomas, to demonstrate the specificity and immunogenicity of tumour-specific antigens, where in rodent models at least, immunity could be readily induced and modulated through the use of immune stimulants. These studies led to translational clinical research. Subsequently he turned his attention to developing monoclonal antibody therapy and pioneering studies were undertaken by his team in Nottingham, work that was to prove critical for the future application of antibodies in the clinic.

Bob was the second president of the European Association for Cancer Research (1973 – 1979) and a co-founding editor of Cancer Immunology and Immunotherapy. His work received worldwide acclaim and he was personally recognised with honorary doctorates and membership of learned societies. In 2005 a symposium was held in Nottingham to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his initial findings and publications on tumour immunity. The proceedings were published in this Journal (see http://springerlink.com/content/0340-7004/55/8/).

In addition to his academic pursuits Bob had a successful career in biotechnology; he entered the field as a consultant in 1984, because he firmly believed that this was the route to developing appropriate clinical treatments through the newly-emerging monoclonal antibody technology. By this time Bob’s group had developed the first monoclonal antibody to enter clinical trials as an imaging agent and he oversaw the licensing of this antibody to the US biotech company XOMA to which he became consultant. At the time, both biotechnology and monoclonal antibody development were in their infancy and the FDA was looking to new companies to aid in their pre-clinical evaluation in order to safely introduce the antibodies as drug targeting agents for clinical use.

Bob was instrumental in developing these techniques and defending the pre-clinical work before the FDA, which served as a basis for the evaluation of mAbs that are used today. He later co-founded a company, ALLERGEN, focused on developing biological agents for treating allergic diseases. This provided the opportunity to use his talent to develop therapies for a different area of medical science.

During his frequent visits to the US, he took great pleasure in learning to fly and co-owned his own private plane. It is reported that he flew with "dash and speed", with a mere one or two spectacular near misses. His other pastime was sailing and he was an avid member of his local Trent Valley Sailing club in Nottingham. Bob leaves a son Neil, daughter-in-law Carol and three grandchildren, who he adored. Just before he died he was able to attend the marriage of his grand-daughter Rachel and he will be remembered by his family, not only as a scientist of repute, but more importantly as a kind, gracious and loving father and grandfather. By the scientific community he will be remembered as a pioneer of tumour immunology, whose work contributed to our current understanding of the subject, where clinical utility is not a vision, but reality. As a post-doctoral scientist working in his laboratory in the 1970’s I found Bob to be unassuming and generous, clearly shaping the direction of the subject. His work and the manner in which he practiced science inspired those who knew him. This short tribute hardly does justice to the career of Robert Baldwin who will be remembered affectionately by his family, friends and colleagues.

Robert C Rees PhD
Professor of Tumour Biology
Research Director