

Obituary Prof. Dr. med. Dr. h.c. David Haim Shmerling

August 3, 1928- Mai 19, 2020



David Shmerling, eminent paediatric gastroenterologist, died May 19 2020, at the age of 91 years. He was a founding member of the European Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology (now ESPGHAN) at its first meeting in Paris 1968 and was also a Co-founder of the German speaking society in 1974 (now GPGE). He leaves a profound imprint on the subspecialty that he fathered, on countless colleagues, trainees and health professionals, and on paediatric medicine.

He was born in Tel Aviv and left Israel to study medicine in Geneva, Montpellier and Zurich. After obtaining his medical degree, he worked in Zurich, Geneva, and Haifa as a young doctor with a strong interest in paediatric gastroenterology. He became the very first full-time paediatric gastroenterologist in Switzerland in the late sixties, got his Venia legendi in 1970, and became associate Professor at the University of Zurich 1976. He retired in 1996.

David Shmerling was very much interested in the diagnosis of Coeliac Disease. After the introduction of taking duodenal biopsies for diagnosing Coeliac Disease by Margot Shiner (1923-1998), Shmerling has extensively explored this procedure and published an important Monography (Peroral intestinal mucosal biopsies in infants and children) describing the stereomicroscopical changes of the duodenal mucosa.

Those of us in ESPGHAN and GPGE who knew him mourn his passing as one of the pioneers of paediatric gastroenterology and regard it as a privilege to have known him with his extraordinary knowledge and, above all, his human warmth and collegiality.

Raoul I. Furlano