

Jiří Pařízek



(1928 – 1991)

in memoriam after twenty years

To pay tribute to the foresight and research contributions of Jiří Pařízek, we can begin by noting that the term of endocrine disruptors was introduced in 1991 by a group of experts for xenobiotics, which significantly influence the hormonal homeostasis of the organism from the external environment. This topic was in Jiří Pařízek's broad interest as related to the problems of environmental influences of present technicized world, especially the impact of air and water pollution, which during last two decades have concerned various forms of life. After examining several tens of Pařízek's publications, which were devoted to these problems already in the middle of the last century, it is possible to conclude that his work advanced his epoch by at least by one generation.

Jiří Pařízek was born in 1928 in Prague, completed the Medical Faculty of Charles University in Prague, and started his scientific career as a PhD student in the former Research Institute of Nutrition. It was not easy, as Jiří's father – a lawyer – was the object of „class discrimination“ (without proper sentence imprisoned in a labour camp); this concerned also Jiří Pařízek personally due to his open practice of religiosity. But due to his talent, diligence, hard work, and creativity he overcame all these handicaps, and finished his PhD thesis „Castration by Cadmium“, which he defended in 1957.

At that time he was already functioning in the Laboratory of the Physiology and Pathophysiology of Metabolism, Institute of Physiology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (ČSAV). Initially, he worked under the guidance of Prof. O. Poupá, MD, DSc. In the year 1963 he became Head of the Laboratory of Reproductive Physiology and Pathophysiology, later Laboratory of Physiology and Pathophysiology of Trace Elements and Mineral Metabolism. His discoveries on the interactions of selected trace elements, especially cadmium, mercury, and selenium, in relationship to homeostatic metabolism had a pioneer character for this scientific discipline. These findings were published repeatedly in most prestigious scientific journals such as *Nature* or *Journal of Endocrinology* and others.

In addition, he excelled by new discoveries of the appearance of desoxycytidin after minor doses of radiation appeared in the urine, which could signal the possibility of initial periods of radiation disease.

His international reputation and broad overview were the reason of repeated invitations as specialist and active participant in the expert committees of the World Health Organization (WHO). There he was finally invited to function during more than ten years as a scientist in the International Program of Chemical Safety (IPCS), in the

field of the evaluation of the medical consequences of the effect of various environmental chemicals, and methodology for foresight of their impact.

After finishing his function in the WHO he had to adapt to the organization changes in the institutes of ČSAV, namely the transfer of the Institute of Nuclear Biology and Radioactivity, with a modified program – i.e. the effect of radiation on the organism. Again, he received international recognition, however, his outstanding scientific experiences gained especially in the WHO, and organizational abilities were unfortunately not at all used under home conditions.

Jiří Pařízek enjoyed lecturing, which he did very well in the Faculty of Pediatrics, and also supervised several PhD students. He was elected a member of several international scientific associations, was charged by some tasks for Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) by the United Nations (UN), and remained

permanently as a member of various international committees of the WHO.

His publication heritage is alive up to the present, and he is still cited in the international scientific literature. His collaborators still remember him – his working enthusiasm, creative ideas and broad collaborations. It was a great loss for Czech science that his early passing finished his scientific career during the period when his international contacts and relationships could have become a remarkable contribution for further progress and strengthening of Czech science.

He is still missed today and it is with fond remembrance that we can still celebrate an excellent scientist, humanist, and colleague whose extraordinary legacy and character is still professionally relevant today.

L. Stárka