

OBITUARY

Prof. Dr. med. Dr. h.c. J. W. Rohen

On May 26, 2022, the Anatomist Prof. Dr. med. Dr. h.c. Johannes Wilhelm Rohen passed away.

Johannes W. Rohen was born on 18.9.1921 in Münster, attended the grammar schools in Oldenburg and Cologne. From 1940 to 1946 he studied human medicine in Cologne, Freiburg, Breslau and Danzig. After obtaining his doctorate in Tübingen and various clinical activities, he decided to pursue a scientific career at the Institute of Anatomy in Mainz, where he habilitated in 1953. Here he was able to deepen his interest in the functional view of the structures of the human organism. In 1963 he was appointed to an associate professorship in Giessen, and in 1964 to a chair of anatomy at the University of Marburg.

In 1974 he moved to the Friedrich Alexander University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, where he held the chair of anatomy until his retirement in 1991. His work as a teacher was characterized by his functional perspective and was reflected in the textbooks “Functional Human Anatomy”, “Functional Histology”, “Functional Neuroanatomy” and “Functional Embryology”. With the “Photo Atlas of Anatomy” he edited together with Chihiro Yokochi an anatomical standard work was created that was translated into over 20 languages. He continued to work scientifically until he was 90 years old and up to this time he was still asked by students to give the traditional introductory lecture for students of human medicine.

Scientifically, he concentrated mainly on the elaboration of the functional morphology of the visual organ and larynx. Research visits took him to the Department of Ophthalmology at Washington University in St. Louis, USA, to Ahwaz, Iran and to Kampala, Uganda.

He described the three-dimensional structure of the iris-ciliary muscle system and its influence on the resistance of aqueous humor outflow and found that the outflow resistance for aqueous humor is mainly localized under the inner wall of Schlemm’s canal (in the subendothelial region of the trabecular meshwork). These findings were



the basis for the development of the glaucoma surgeries trabeculectomy and trabeculotomy. Electron microscopic and histochemical workup of the surgical material from trabeculectomies sent to him internationally then enabled him to differentiate the various forms of glaucoma. He was one of the first to culture trabecular cells to further investigate the causes of glaucoma.

With the advent of scanning electron microscopy, he was able to extend Helmholtz’s theory of accommodation by describing new zonular systems and made significant contributions to the non-lenticular region of presbyopia, which played an important role in the development of intraocular lenses. His work on the functional morphology of the ciliary epithelium and conjunctiva was also of clinical importance.

His research has been recognized by highly prestigious awards, including the Albrecht von Graefe Award of the German Ophthalmological Society, twice the highly endowed Alcon Research Award, USA and the prestigious Helen Keller Award, USA as well as the Anton Waldeyer prize of the Anatomische Gesellschaft (German Anatomical Society).

In addition, he obtained a honorary doctor of the University of Uppsala, Sweden, and he was member of the Leopoldina (German Academy of Sciences) in Halle (Saale) and the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz (Germany).

We coworkers, students and friends remember our revered teacher with heartfelt gratitude.

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