

Prof. Dr. med. Günther Ritzel

*Editor-in-Chief
passed away on Tuesday, 20 June 1989*

The Publishers and Editors of the International Journal for Vitamin and Nutrition Research share the grief of the international scientific community and would like to express their sincere sympathy to his family.

Günther Ritzel was born in Frankfurt (Germany) on 11 October 1924. His family had to flee the Nazi terror in the 1930s and found a new home in Basel (Switzerland).

At Basel University he studied medicine and received his diploma in 1950. Subsequently, he received his training in pharmacology under K. Bucher and in biochemistry under K. Bernhard. At that time, K. Bernhard was one of the pioneers of the isotope methodology, and with the help of this method Dr. Ritzel investigated many problems of lipid and vitamin metabolism.



Mention should be made of his findings that in absorption of retinol bilirubin acts as a natural antioxidant (Bernhard K., Ritzel G., Steiner K. U. [1954] *Helv Chim Acta* 37, 306). After three years of research work in the laboratory, he returned to clinical medicine and became a specialist in internal medicine in 1957.

In the same year, he was elected Director of the Cantonal School Medical Department of Basel-Stadt, and during his 32 years in office led it to international recognition.

In 1960, he introduced the general oral vaccination of school children against polio and has been decisively involved in water fluoridation. Yet his main interest was not just to improve the physical health of school children by preventive measures, but also to further their mental and social well-being.

In 1963, he received the «*venia legendi*» at the Medical Faculty of the University of Basel for the topics biochemistry and nutrition, and in 1968 he was elected Professor of Social and Preventive Medicine.

He was interested not only in experimental research, but also in epidemiological problems and field research concerning nutritional and health education. Mention should be made of his interest in methods for assessing vitamin status in humans, and of numerous epidemiological investigations of population groups in Switzerland. Among others, he was responsible for the nutritional part of the so-called Basel Study III, where he observed the inverse correlation between milk-drinking and plasma cholesterol. Unfortunately, he was unable to isolate the cholesterol-depressing principle of milk, but his successors will surely use his findings to reach this goal. His scientific work has been published in more than 200 papers.

Dr. Ritzel was the initiator of the regular Swiss Nutrition Reports and was among the editors of the first and second volumes of this series.

Dr. Ritzel was a member of numerous scientific and official committees. For 16 years he was chairman of the scientific sub-commission of the Federal Nutrition Commission and became president of the commission in 1988. He was president of the Swiss Society of Nutrition Research (1970-1974) and of the Swiss Society for Social and Preventive Medicine (1977-1980).

In 1966, he was awarded the prize of the Swiss Society of Nutrition Research for his work on the significance of antibiotics for animal nutrition. He received the honorary membership of the Austrian Society for Nutrition Research (1973) and of the German Society of Nutrition (1976).

Dr. Ritzel organized many national and international symposia, among them the International Bread Symposium in Zurich, with more than 400 participants (1980). He was also the editor of the proceedings of most of these symposia.

In 1968, he became Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Vitamin and Nutrition Research. Since he was a hard-working man, who never slept more than five hours a day, he was able to assume this burden without neglecting his other duties. During his editorship, the Journal became internationally recognized. Numerous leading scientists entrusted him with their manuscripts. One of his main principles was that the time between receipt of a manuscript and its publication should be not longer than half a year. In case of rejection, this time was even shorter. Many manuscripts had to be sent back to the authors not for lack of quality, but because of shortage of space. He was always struggling to get more space for publications, and many of his suggestions were accepted by the publisher. The International Journal of Vitamin and Nutrition Research was one of his most beloved children. He dreamt that after his retirement in Autumn 1989, he could invest all his strength in the further development of this journal. Unfortunately, he did not reach this goal, but he leaves to his successor a well-established journal. We the authors, readers, editors and publishers, are all grateful to him for his work.

Georg Brubacher

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