

## Obituary

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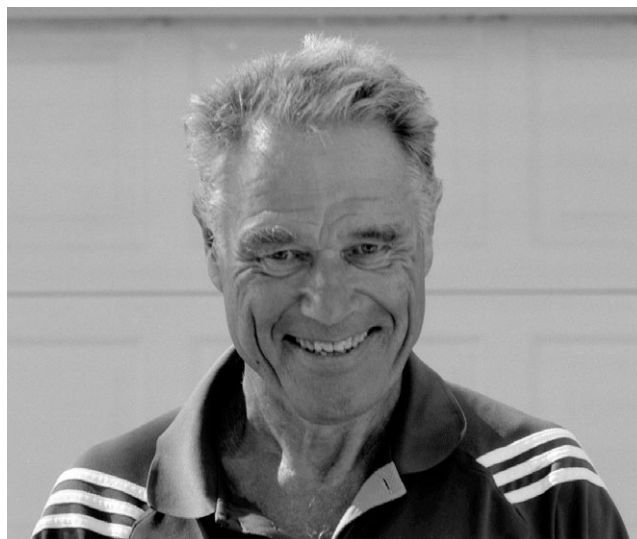
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Professor Doctor Peter E. Lange died on June 17, 2020, shortly before his 85th birthday. The former director of the Department for Congenital Heart Defects at the German Heart Center in Berlin was, and probably still is, one of the most important and formative personalities of paediatric cardiology and the cardiology of adults with CHDs, especially but not only in Germany.

Peter was born into a medical family. His father was a family practitioner and his mother a midwife. The family influence set his career goal at a very young age, since he was aiming in taking over his father's practice after graduation. He studied at the Christian Albrechts University in Kiel and at the Free University of Berlin. He commenced his post-graduate training in 1963 at Kiel but soon took the chance to move with his family to the United States of America, where in 1971 he received a degree in Internal Medicine and Cardiology from the Baylor University College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. He then returned to Kiel in Germany where he completed his medical training in paediatric cardiology, becoming a consultant and director of the catheterisation laboratory. He completed his PhD thesis in 1983 on the topic: "Quantitative Dextro-Video-Angiography - Method and Clinical Application". In this work, he was the first to demonstrate that quantification of the volume and function of the right ventricle was both possible and feasible.

In 1988, he was appointed Professor of Pediatrics with a focus on paediatric cardiology at the Free University of Berlin and became the director of the Department of Congenital Heart Disease and Pediatric Cardiology at the German Heart Center in Berlin. Under his guidance, the department rapidly grew into one of the most important clinics in Germany, benefitting markedly from the well-known historic event of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

With his visions, ideals, and goals, he made exemplary contributions to the care of children, adolescents, and especially adults with CHDs. He was the first in Germany who expanded the routine cardiac care of children with CHDs to adulthood, thus creating in Berlin the first highly specialised department for grown-ups with CHD (GUCH). In 1998, he saw one of his visions come to fruition with the creation of the Reference Center for Adults with Congenital Heart Disease, paving the way for the development of a somehow standardised professional medical care for this specific patient group. Now, the training of adult CHD is firmly embedded in the paediatric cardiac training course and has become routine for all paediatric cardiologists in Germany. Following this programme, a new specialisation for physicians and departments came to life, specifically the "ACHD" certification recently accepted by the German medical board as a full qualification.

His idea of a nationwide multi-institutional collaboration finally led to the establishment of the Competence Network for Congenital Heart Defects and the National Register in Germany,

with about 60,000 patients now enrolled. This success can be attributed to his many years of activity even after his official retirement in 2004. From an early stage, he had the vision of an electronic health card which contains all the relevant findings of a patient. Politicians and providers of health care are now trying to crystallise the vision. At the time, his idea attracted laughs from many, and its initial implementation was unfortunately prevented. Peter, nonetheless, never lost sight of his goals.

In 2001, he received the Federal Cross of Merit for his services within the programme “Bridge for Children with Heart Disease”, and for his overall contributions to the field of paediatric cardiology in Germany. In 2007, he was awarded honorary membership of the German Society for Pediatric Cardiology and Congenital Heart Disease in recognition of his services to German paediatric cardiology. His scientific work is extensive and is but partially reflected in around 400 scientific publications in international journals, along with about 25 book chapters. In addition, he supervised about 60 doctoral theses and 12 PhD theses, known as “habilitationen” in Germany.

Peter Lange was a mentor for many of us. Today, 14 university professorships in German-speaking countries, as well as 21 senior staff positions in Germany, are filled by those who trained under his supervision. In addition, countless independent paediatric cardiologists and specialists in adult CHD were trained and

influenced by his unique way of fascinating us in the field of congenital cardiology from the fetus to the adult. This created a unique international network, which we continue to recognise as the “Lange Community”. In this regard, he always demanded the highest performance from his team, but at the same time he was always leading by example. His character, his enthusiasm, and his commitment to his word and to the patients, all this led to a specific “corporate identity”. It is this identity that still makes the “Lange community” immediately recognisable. The community is now dedicated to continue his ideas, not only in Germany but also worldwide.

Professor Lange was an extraordinary, humorous, warm-hearted and at the same time ambitious manager who never lost sight of his patients and team. He impressed his students that there is always a solution. He encouraged everyone to think outside the box and proceeded with great strides and numerous examples. He trusted his employees just as his employees trusted him. Of utmost importance, he always kept his word. Even after his retirement, he remained in close contact with many of the Lange community, until his death, participating in their scientific, social, and even private activities. He remained the most important fatherly advisor and continues to be a lasting example for many of us.

Peter E. Lange, we wish you farewell.