



Editorial

Phytotherapy in Europe – 18 years of ESCOP Presidency Laudation on the occasion of the retirement of Professor Fritz H. Kemper from ESCOP

On 10 September 2010 Professor Dr. Fritz H. Kemper retired from the European Scientific Cooperative on Phytotherapy (ESCOP) having been President for more than 18 years, and at the wheel of ESCOP from its beginning in 1989. Thanks to his great personal commitment, his scientific competence and his diplomatic skills Professor Kemper steered its course safely through many a storm. We, his colleagues from ESCOP, very much regret his retirement and would like to express our sincere appreciation and admiration for his activity and his energy over such a long period and for his great success in establishing the scientifically based phytotherapy on a European level.

Based on his visionary views in the field of phytotherapy, Professor Kemper was one of the co-initiators of ESCOP. From the very beginning of ESCOP he has been involved in its scientific work and the preparation of harmonized monographs on efficacy and safety and medicinal use of plants, starting with the first five monographs in three languages in 1990 and followed by loose-leaf binders containing six fascicules, each of 10 monographs; later on by two hardback books in 2003 and 2009 and finally the preparation of the most recent online publication. In his position as a member of the Board of Supervising Editors, a well-experienced international body of academic teachers, he had a final critical look on the monographs prior to their publication.

Professor Kemper has always waved the flag for herbs as medicinal products, particularly when the discussion arose as to where to draw the borderline with other groups of products of herbal origin, and he has decisively contributed to preventing their downgrading into other categories which do not require a proof of quality, efficacy and safety. He has always advocated a differentiation of herbal medicinal products with a high and a low level of evidence.

His idea was to assign superior indications to those products which are based on clinical studies or bibliographic data, but also to permit access to the market with low indications for those products which can refer to practical experience and traditional use.

The numerous ESCOP Annual General Meetings as well as several major ESCOP Symposia during the past few years, the last one held in Cologne on 18 June 2009, bear witness to his excellent scientific competence, his personal charisma and his skills to enthuse and convince a big audience of the importance of phytotherapy. Without his unfailing lobbying for “scientific phytotherapy” on an European level many achievements in this field during the last two decades are inconceivable. Cooperation in the smaller circle of colleagues from the ESCOP Board was qualified by his fairness and accuracy, but also by his humour and generosity. Certainly Board members will remember his charming habit during wintertime of supplying each of them with a delicious “Stollen” from his hometown of Münster!

We express our gratitude and admiration for everything that Professor Kemper has done for ESCOP, and we will miss him!

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