

## **In memoriam Prof Dr Hans-Jörg Oestern**

On February 14, 2025, the former, long-standing head physician of the Clinic for Trauma and Reconstructive Surgery at the General Hospital in Celle and our President of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Unfallchirurgie (DGU) of 1997 passed away at the age of 80 after a long period of serious illness. Hardly anyone else had such a significant influence on German trauma surgery over 50 years as he did. Hans-Jörg Oestern, born in 1945 in Sanderbusch, studied medicine in Bonn and Vienna from 1964 to 1970. After his state examination, his license to practice medicine, and his doctorate at the Medical Faculty in Bonn in 1970, he completed his medical residency from 1970 to 1972 in Bonn, Hamburg, and Hannover.

From 1972 to 1978, he trained as a specialist in surgery at the Department of Surgery at Medizinische Hochschule Hannover (MHH) under Prof Harald Tscherne, Prof Hans Georg Borst (cardiac, thoracic and vascular surgery) and Prof Rudolf Pichlmayr (transplant and abdominal surgery). As early as 1978, Prof Tscherne appointed him senior physician, and in the same year, he and Otmar Trentz became founding members of the US Shock Society in Airlie, Virginia. In 1979, he acquired the sub-specialty of trauma surgery. In 1980, he habilitated about severe traumatic shock and was awarded the title of Privatdozent with the *Venia legendi*. In 1984, Hans-Jörg Oestern became an associate professor and was appointed first senior physician and deputy by Prof Tscherne. In 1985, he was appointed chief physician of the Clinic for Trauma and Reconstructive Surgery at the General Hospital in Celle. Oestern, who also became a specialist in orthopedics and trauma surgery in 2005, managed this clinic until 2010, and again on an acting basis until 2012. He remained associated with patients and the clinic as a patient advisor for a further six years.

### **High honors**

In 1982, Hans-Jörg Oestern received the DGU Hans Liniger Science Prize for his research on severe traumatic shock. In 1997, he was DGU President and organized the DGU Congress with the motto "Together we are strong." In 2000, he represented the German Society for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery as its president. From 2004 to 2012, Hans-Jörg Oestern was president of the German section of AO International. In 2008, he was president of the Vereinigung Nordwestdeutscher Chirurgen. In 2000, Oestern was awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz 1st Class for his tireless rescue efforts during the ICE disaster in Eschede (1999). In 2005, the venerable University of Madras awarded him the title of Prof Dr honoris causa for his outstanding services to polytrauma care and disaster medicine. He was awarded honorary memberships by the German Society for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (DGPW) in 2000, the DGU in 2009, and ESTES and AO Trauma Deutschland in 2012. The Mitteldeutsche Chirurgenvereinigung honored him with the Richard von Volkmann Medal in 2012, and the DGWP honored him with the Karl August Schuchardt Bust in 2013.

### **Innovations in trauma surgery**

His early work on the pathophysiology of soft tissue damage led to the classification of open and closed fractures according to Tscherne and Oestern in 1982, whereby mainly the classification for closed fractures is used internationally. In addition to numerous publications, his intensive research into treating the severely injured has led to the groundbreaking German-language work "Das Polytrauma. Präklinisches und klinisches Management" (2007). Internationally, his co-edited books, such as the European Manual of Medicine, Trauma Surgery, Volumes I-III (2011-2014), have contributed to vital

improvements in managing severely injured patients at the accident scene, in the trauma room, and in surgical care.

The "Hannoveraner Polytrauma Schlüssel," published by Oestern et al. in 1985, is still an internationally used classification system for injury severity alongside the AIS and ISS as the PTS (Hannover Polytrauma Score).

### **DGU merits**

From 1992 to 1997, Hans-Jörg Oestern was head of the DGU-AG scoring systems, which, as AG-Polytrauma, in 1997 merged into the Section for Emergency, Intensive Care and Critical Care together with the AG-Notfall- und Intensivmedizin. From 1998-2003, he was head of the Policy Committee.

In 1997, his year as President, he published, together with Jürgen Probst, a highly regarded commemorative publication to mark the 75th anniversary of the DGU, "Unfallchirurgie in Deutschland – Bilanz und Perspektiven," which publicized the progress of German trauma surgery beyond the country's borders.

For over 22 years, from 1999 to 2021, Oestern represented our society as a German member of the UEMS Division and was significantly involved in this important European specialist examination (EBSQ Trauma Surgery).

For over twenty years (2004-2024), Hans-Jörg Oestern was a member of the Stromeyer Literature Prize Board of Trustees, including four years as its chairman. He initiated the award's renaming as the Stromeyer-Probst Medal, which has been awarded since 2019.

In 1998, he was awarded the Carl Thiem Medal, named after the protagonist of German trauma surgery, and in 2022, he co-published a second commemorative publication, "100 Jahre Deutsche Gesellschaft für Unfallchirurgie. DGU 1922-2022".

### **Gratitude and remembrance**

Not only our specialist society but also others, as well as his colleagues, students, and patients, owe him a great debt of gratitude. We will all remember him as an ambitious researcher, a pioneering trauma surgeon, and an excellent teacher of surgical principles. He was a mastermind, an outstanding surgeon, an empathetic physician, a role model, and a friend. His daughter Stefanie is the third generation to carry on the fire of trauma surgery. His cheerful nature, extraordinary sense of humor, and infectious laughter resonate and will always remain in our hearts.

*Hans Zwipp, DGU Senator*