

In memoriam: Professor Karel Horký

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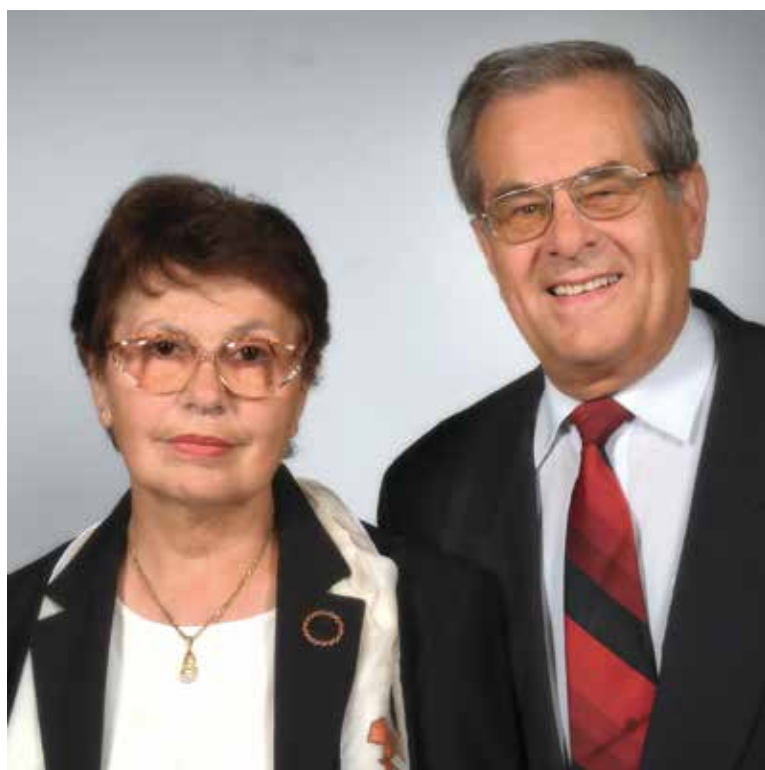


FIGURE 1 Hanna and Karel Horký during the Centenary Gala Dinner in Katowice, 2006 (photo by Krzysztof Niesporek)

Great sadness and deep affection marked the recent passing of Professor Karel Horký, a great Czech internist, great mind, an honorary member of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine, and a long-time friend of mine.

Professor Karel Horký was born in Brno (Czechoslovakia, now Czech Republic) on May 9, 1933. He completed a high school in Třebíčí. In 1951, he entered the Medical Faculty of the Masaryk University in Brno, and he graduated from the university in 1957. For 3 years, he worked at the Regional Hospital in Děčín. There he received the first degree of board certification in internal medicine. In 1960, he moved to Prague and started his professional career as an assistant at the Third Department of Internal Medicine of the Charles University. There he obtained the second degree of board certification in internal medicine (1964) and completed his PhD thesis (1966), and later, in 1984, he received

a DSc degree. He was twice a visiting scientist at the Clinical Research Institute in Montreal, Canada (1969–1970, 1984), where he was working on endocrine and metabolic aspects of hypertension. Upon return to Prague, he founded the Laboratory for Endocrine and Metabolic Research at the Third Department of Internal Medicine, and became head of this unit. He went on to become the head of the Second Department of Internal Medicine in 1990, and contributed to the development of the department until retirement in 1998. Following his retirement, Professor Horký served as professor emeritus and was an active personality in scientific societies. He was a president of the Czech Society of Internal Medicine (1991–2005), and earlier, he was a president of the Czech Society of Hypertension (1994–1998). He passed away on August 11, 2016, in Prague.

Professor Karel Horký authored more than 450 original papers and about 15 handbooks and monographs. Still a student, he was attracted to clinical pharmacology by Professor Jiří Štefl (1904–1961). Professor Štefl was famous for seceding from the Communist Party to protest against political show trials. He was prosecuted and finally he lost the university position during incompetent Masaryk University management purges during these times. Interestingly, he was also an author of a few novels. In Prague, Professor Horký worked under the auspices of the famous Professor Josef Charvát (1897–1984), founder of the Third Department of Internal Medicine in Prague and a great endocrinologist as well as author of several philosophical works. Professor Josef Charvát was an honorary member of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine. Endocrinological and metabolic research of Professor Horký was fruitfully carried out under the supervision of Professor Jacques Genest (born 1919) in Montreal. They were working on the role of sodium, aldosterone, and angiotensin II in the renin–angiotensin system in arterial hypertension as well as on the natriuretic factor present in the heart atria. Professor Horký conducted research until the last years of his life, focusing

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in those investigations on molecular aspects of hypertension.

Professor Horký was a member of several scientific societies, some of which awarded him with honorary membership (Czech Medical Society, Czech Society of Internal Medicine, Czech Society of Cardiology, Czech Society of Hypertension, Czech Society of Endocrinology, European Society of Hypertension, and American College of Physicians). He was organizer of the 19th Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Hypertension and the 12th European Meeting on Hypertension (June 23–27, 2002, Prague).

Professor Karel Horký visited Poland several times. He received honorary membership of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine as well as the Medal of our society. In 1998, he signed the Declaration of Wisła on behalf of Czech internists, during the Third Central European Congress of Internal Medicine. His lecture delivered during the Congress in Wisła was awarded with the first prize (*ex aequo* with Professor Ivan Duříš). I had the honor to introduce Professor Karel Horký as candidate to the Executive Board of the International Society of Internal Medicine in 2000. He was the only representative of a Slavonic country in the Board (2000–2006). In 2006, he was invited to the solemn ceremony of the Centenary of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine and received the Centenary Medal. He also collaborated with Polish cardiologists and hypertension specialists.

The last time I met Professor Horký was in 2013 in Prague during the 12th European Congress of Internal Medicine. As always, he was a brilliant debater and we had a friendly discussion. In addition to being a great physician, Karel was a fine gentleman always ready to help others, full of optimism, and always ready to offer his constructive advice. With Karel's death, the world of internal medicine has lost an outstanding scientist, beloved colleague, dedicated teacher, and an extraordinary leader of several societies. He will forever be remembered.