

International Society of Lymphology

Prof. Dr. Michael Földi

It is a great but daunting honour to be asked to write an appreciation of the life and work of such a man as *Michael Földi*, whose 60th. birthday has just occurred. I have been very privileged to have known and to have collaborated with him for nearly 15 years, yet I am continually being surprised by unexpected depths and aspects of his character. Truly we can never say we know another person, perhaps not even ourselves; hence all I can do is to attempt to convey my knowledge and impressions – and to unite us in wishing him well.

Prof. *Földi* was born in Budapest in 1920. He was the son of a physician and a well-known author; these parental traits have been well maintained. It is as both a medical-scientist and a writer that he is so justly internationally famous. He works as both a physician and a laboratory researcher – passing with remarkable ease from one realm to the other but perhaps his most unique gift is as a writer. He has the rare faculty of making huge leaps of the mind, based both on his own results and on masterly evaluations of those of others, to carefully document the evidence, and to present all the steps leading to his final conclusions in a most lucid fashion. His writing is always exciting and clear; it is a great pleasure to read. Thus he has become not only one of the great workers and critical thinkers in Lymphology, but also one who has done much to remind traditional Medicine of the very existence of lymphatics and to emphasize how important they actually are in the economy of the body.

Prof. *Földi* received his medical training at the University of Szeged, where he was greatly influenced by *Rusznayák*. His account of



his old chief may be found in “Lymphology 7 (1974) 185–186”. This makes fascinating reading when considering the character and works of Prof. *Földi*; it is very evident that he is a spiritual child of *Rusznayák* and practices much that *Rusznayák* taught and exemplified. I refer in particular to his attitude towards scientific enquiry, humanity with patients, and fascination with all aspects of life.

From 1945 to 1960 Prof. *Földi* worked at the University Hospital of Budapest, serving as its clinical director. He then occupied the chair of the 2nd. Department of Medicine at the University of Szeged. He came to Western Germany in 1969 and was research director of Schaper & Brümmer, Ringelheim, until 1978. He is now medical director of the unique Feldbergklinik für Lymphologie.

He used all these positions to further research in, and the knowledge of, Lymphology. He

has worked with many collaborators indeed, most notably in recent years with his wife: Dr. *Ethel Földi-Börcsök*). He always unites his specialised knowledge and interests with the best aspect that his collaborators can contribute. Then he synthesises all their results and points of view into united wholes – in a large series of papers, reviews, monographs and books. He is undoubtedly the chief organiser and synthesiser of Lymphology. This has been achieved not by a superficial approach, but by a deep understanding of the basic problems and underlying implications of the many subjects relating to Lymphology (being guided especially by the logic of History), and by a rapid grasp of the essentials of the varied ancillary techniques he has used – or begged and coerced others into using. In the latter cases, many who agreed to do one simple investigation in this “unimportant” field – “just to aid the cause of Science” – awoke many years later to find themselves still enthusiastically pursuing Lymphology.

While Prof. *Földi*'s work has covered many aspects of Lymphology, and related areas, undoubtedly one of his most famous contributions is his classification of the oedemas – including his insistence that any oedema at all is a sign that the lymphatic system has failed in one way or another. In this he has recently included the concept that proteolysis in the tissues ('extra-lymphatic mastery of plasma proteins') assists the lymphatics in

protein removal, so that any high-protein oedema is a sign that both systems have failed. Another most important aspect of his work has been many experiments showing the histological and biochemical consequences of lymphatic failure, sometimes associated with failures of other systems. This has been crucial for emphasising the real importance of the lymphatic system. To this should be coupled his concept of prelymphatic pathways, and the many experiments showing how in some regions (notably the brain and retina) they form an organised system, perform similar functions to the true – endothelialised – lymphatics, drain into these, and cause similar disorganisations in the regions they drain when they fail to do this completely. Finally, and perhaps of greatest significance for the future of the therapy of lymphoedema – and indeed of all high-protein oedemas, is his work on the benzopyrone group of drugs. He initiated their use and performed many of the pioneer experiments.

Prof. *Földi* is a charter-member of the ISL, and has received many honours and medals in many countries. He has organised many meetings, edits a journal, and lives a highly active academic life as well as being a leading Lymphological specialist. However, he is to us far more regarded for his deep insight, clarity of thought and word, originality of experiment, and the strength and humanity of his character.

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