

Obituary

Prof. Jozef Zachar, 1925 – 2000



It is uneasy to make a final assessment of the scientific contribution made by a contemporary when his ideas and discoveries have not yet gone through the review by time. Prof. Jozef Zachar who recently passed away (on 28 April, 2000) has certainly been one of those scientists whose lifelong work was key to the development of a certain scientific discipline in Slovakia. His scientific career was associated with the development of investigations into electrophysiological processes at the molecular level. It was Prof. Zachar's merit that a group of experts formed in Slovakia following his example who were able to keep pace with the

trends of world science in this area. He would always prefer multidisciplinary, exactly analytical approach to the object of his investigations, and this has always brought numerous remarkable results. It would be impossible to offer in this space a detailed account of all the principal priority results Prof. Jozef Zachar could obtain. His works concerning the mechanism of the generation of action potentials in excitable cell membranes, of the kinetics of changes in conductances of ion channels, or excitation-contraction coupling in muscles can justly be considered classical. The correct feeling and intuition in orientating scientific research in the eighties led him to attempt to methodologically link biophysics and electrophysiology with molecular biology and genetics at the Centre of Physiological Sciences, Slovak Academy of Sciences that he headed. This was the topics Prof. Zachar put to the cradle of the Institute of Molecular Physiology and Genetics, Slovak Academy of Sciences that was established on 1 January, 1990 and whose founder and the first director he was. In 1982, Prof. Zachar founded the international journal *General Physiology and Biophysics* that has become one of the most successful scientific periodicals of the former Eastern bloc and that has so far published about 1000 scientific papers.

Prof. Jozef Zachar was born at Lukáčovce near Nitra on 23 March, 1925. He graduated from Comenius University Medical School, Bratislava, in 1950. He wrote and defended his PhD thesis at the Institute of Physiology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague, in 1955. Thereafter, he came to work at the Institute of Experi-

mental Medicine, Slovak Academy of Sciences and, later on, at the Institute of Normal and Pathological Physiology, Slovak Academy of Sciences where he worked as head of the Department of General Physiology. In 1977, he was appointed Regular Member of the Slovak and Czechoslovak Academies of Sciences. He was appointed professor of biophysics of the Comenius University Medical School in 1971. Between 1975–1990 he was member of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and held the office of the Vice-President of the Academy between 1978–1990. Also, he was Presidium member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He retired in 1995.

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