

LAUDATIO ESA Gold Dr. Max Wichtl

The Egon Stahl-Award in Gold is the highest scientific honour of the Society for Medicinal Plant Research (GA). It can be awarded every third year.

The Egon Stahl-Award in Gold acknowledges the **outstanding scientific lifetime work** of a research scientist who has been closely attached to Pharmaceutical Biology (Pharmacognosy, Chemistry of Natural Products), in its whole range, through his scientific work.

The Egon Stahl-Prize in Gold is endowed with EURO 5.000, a donation from GA. The donation was made with the intention of furthering scientific aims deserving aid.

It is a pleasure and honor for me to announce the laureate of the ESA Gold: this outstanding personality with exceptional scientific achievements in the field of medicinal plants as well as of his national and international importance in the field of Pharmacognosy, Pharmaceutical Biology and Pharmacy is - Prof.Dr. Max WICHTL!

After his graduation (studies of chemistry and botany) he started his career with the Austrian Commission on Pharmacopeia, later after finishing his studies of Pharmacy he joined the Institute of Pharmacognosy at the University of Vienna as an assistant professor. In this function he motivated many a student for thinking, reflecting and summarizing ('Studying means looking critically at a topic'). His habilitation in pharmacognosy took place in 1965, in 1973 he was appointed associate professor; apart from scientific publications (focused on cardiac glycosides) he gained international fame through his book 'Pharmacognostic Chemical Analysis' (1971).

Being appointed full professor of pharmaceutical biology in Marburg/Lahn in 1973 Wichtl had the opportunity to realise his own ideas of lecture and research as head of institute: A great number of his publications were written during his time in Marburg: In scientific literature on medicinal plants his name is closely connected with results not only in the field of cardiac glycosides, but of the analysis of Gelsemium alkaloids, of iridoids in the genus Penstemon, of Galbanum and Curcuma. His comprehensive book entitled "Digitalis" attests to his extraordinary knowledge in the field of Digitalis (2000) – the book preserves the complete scientific knowledge on Digitalis for the future generations.

His qualities as an academic teacher are reflected in more than 40 PhD theses which came out under his headship. Besides, he is also well-known as a lecturer at further education courses. His excellent professional reputation together with an obliging, if necessary decisive personality led him into a great number of functions where he did not only represent his own field with absolute competence but also kept an eye on the entire field of pharmacy and its scientific and practical aspects. To give you a few examples, let me mention: twice dean of the school of pharmacy and food chemistry in Marburg/Lahn, head of the section "Pharmacobotany-Pharmaceutical Biology" in the APV (1982-1988), author and editor of the commentaries of the Herbal drug monographs in the German and European Pharmacopeia, his commentaries have always been and are a reliable source for botanical, structural and analytical details of all herbal drugs and herbal preparations relevant in Europe. Furthermore he strengthened phytotherapy as co-editor of the journal "Planta Medica", as a member of the pharmacopoeial committee and as a long-standing member of the scientific committee of the Bundesgesundheitsamt (BGA). The Output of the latter are the "Standardzulassungen" for herbal teas (including their commentaries) which finally made possible the status of herbal drugs as accepted phytotherapeutics in pharmacy.

His commitment to the Society for Medicinal Plant Research (GA) is documented as the President of the GA (1990-1993), as the Vice president (1988-1989; 1994-1997) and as a Member of the Advisory Board (1984-1987) as well as the organizer of the GA Annual Meeting in 1981 in Marburg/Germany. The GA honoured his commitment by awarding him honorary membership of the GA in 1995.

In all his functions and positions within the Society for Medicinal Plant Research his 'Viennese charm' and 'Prussian sense of duty' are as much appreciated as his professional qualities. He has contributed significantly to the re-orientation of the Society for Medicinal Plant Research.

Academic lecturer, researcher and functionary Max Wichtl owes his international fame not least to his book 'Herbal Drugs and Herbal Medicinal Products'. This work has been translated into various languages and has become a valuable helper in pharmaceutical practice even beyond the borders of Central Europe. The 1st edition appeared in 1984, a second edition followed in 1989, the 3rd edition also including phytopharmaceuticals followed, the 4th edition (2002) is now on

the market. At present Max Wichtl is busy with the 5th edition, which will appear at the end of 2008.

The "Teedrogen" is a document of Max Wichtl's outstanding competence in and life-long dedication to medicinal plant research concerning both aspects, phytochemistry and Phytotherapy. The book has been translated into English, French, Italian, Spanish and Japanese.

With honoring Prof. Wichtl with the ESA in Gold GA express the high esteem for him personally and for the outstanding scientific personality as well as our sincere thanks for his commitment of the GA.

Brigitte Kopp
President