

In memoriam Professor Szabolcs Nyiredy
June 7th 1950—October 30th 2006

It is with great sorrow, that we have to report the death of Professor Szabolcs Nyiredy who passed away on 30 October 2006.

Szabolcs Nyiredy was born on 7 June 1950 in Budapest. On completion of his studies at the Pharmaceutical Faculty of Semmelweis University he received a Diploma in Pharmacy in 1975. In 1976 he received the Doctor of Pharmacy degree, then in 1978 the Diploma of Professional Pharmacist of Pharmaceutical Technology. Working in the Institute of Medicinal Plants and Drugs he became a Professional Pharmacist for Pharmacognosy and Phytochemistry in 1983. In 1984 he obtained the degree of Candidate of Biological Sciences (Ph.D.) at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, then in 1991 the degree of Doctor of Chemical Science (D.Sc.). In 2004 he was elected as corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

It is my great honour to write a few words in memory of our dear friend Szabolcs Nyiredy. He was an outstanding scientist in the fields of pharmaceutical science, medicinal plants and separation science. At the end of the seventies he contributed to the introduction of the forced flow planar chromatographic technique, overpressure planar liquid chromatography (OPLC) developed in Hungary. In 1983, he started to work at the Department of Pharmacy at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zürich as research fellow. In 1984 he was nominated associate professor. During this period, in cooperation with his former Institute, he contributed tremendously to the development of various separation techniques. His research activity concentrated on two adjacent fields. On the one hand, development of an optimization system which promises the joint application of up-to-date techniques of planar and column chromatography and furnishes the strategy for the analysis and preparative isolation of extracts of medicinal plants. On the other hand, development and combination of highly efficient separation techniques, suitable for the intentional and rapid separation of various groups of components with similar structures, and finally isolation and purification of individual compounds.

In the frame of these activities he developed the PRISMA system for selection and optimization of operating parameters in TLC and HPLC, rendering possible the transition among analytical and preparative, planar and column chromatographic techniques. In order to improve extraction and separation techniques he developed and applied a number of off-line forced flow analytical and micropreparative methods as well as on-line preparative operations. For this purpose he developed a new rotation planar chromatograph, ROTACHROM for implementation of various centrifugal planar chromatographic techniques.

After his return from Zürich to Budapest, he became director, then chairman and director of the Research Institute for Medicinal Plants. In continuation of his research activity he developed new strategies and methods for determination and isolation of valuable compounds from medicinal plants. As an improvement of the ROTACHROM apparatus he developed a new multifunctional instrument called EXTRACHROM, suitable for application both for extraction and chromatography. His scientific achievements were reported by him as author, coauthor and editor in 5 books, 14 monographs and symposia proceedings, 22 book-chapters, nearly 150 publications and 18 patents.

Professor Szabolcs Nyiredy was a well sought and popular speaker in international and national symposia. He presented 36 plenary lectures and directed 11 advanced courses as visiting professor in various countries. He was nominated as Honorary Professor in 1991 at the Semmelweis University. In the last 10 years he received the same title from three other Hungarian Universities.

In addition to his scientific activities Szabolcs was a talented and enthusiastic organizer of scientific events and dissemination of scientific information. He was board member, secretary and chairman in an amazing number of international and national societies and committees. He was board member of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Societies, the European Society for Separation Science, the Scientific Committee of the

International Symposium on Chromatography, the Scientific Committee of the International Symposium on Planar Chromatography, the World Meeting of Pharmaceutics, Biopharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Technology. He was general secretary of the International Society for Planar Separation and chairman of Central European Group for Separation Science.

In the Hungarian scientific life, at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences he was an active member in the Commission of Analytical Chemistry, the Scientific Doctoral Committee, the Complex Committee of Pharmaceutical Science. He was general secretary (2000), then president (2004) of the Hungarian Pharmaceutical Society, chairman of the Pharmacognosy Committee of the Hungarian Pharmacopoeia, chairman of the Discussion Group of Chromatography at the Hungarian Chemical Society (1994), founding president of the Hungarian Society of Separation Sciences (1996). In his last position he established two international awards, the Halász Medal Award (1997) and the Csaba Horváth Memorial Award (2004) in recognition of outstanding achievements and cooperation in the development of chromatography in Hungary.

In the course of these activities he organized and directed 15 international conferences (First World Meeting on Pharmaceutics, Biopharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Technology in 1995; Balaton Symposium on High-Performance Separation Methods in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005; International Symposia on Planar Chromatography in 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005; EUFEPS in 2000). He also initiated and organized 22 national conferences in the framework of the Hungarian Society of Separation Sciences and the Hungarian Pharmaceutical Society. The careful selection of the lecturers and the lectures guaranteed the high scientific level of these conferences. In addition, the carefulness and ideas of Szabolcs made these events unforgettable for all participants. May I recall here the boat excursions on the Danube and the Balaton, the firework at the shore of Balaton, the tournament in the castle of Sümeg, the visits to famous wine-cellars and a number of other courtesies offered to the participants.

Another field to be addressed Szabolcs contribution as Editor and Editorial Board Member of a considerable number of scientific journals. First of all, he was Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Planar Separation. He was an active member in the Editorial Board of CHROMATOGRAPHIA, Acta Chromatographica, Planta Medica, Acta Universitatis Cibaiensis and Annales Pharmacia.

His exceptional ability was recognised and honoured by numerous awards and titles. Some of the most notable were the Waksmundzka medal, the Koritsánszky medal, the Medical Academy of Lublin Award, the Societas Pharmaceutica Hungaria medal, the Schulek medal, the Tswett medal, the Dabis medal and the Dénes Gábor Award.

We have lost not only an outstanding scientist, talented leader and organizer, but also a very dear friend. Szabolcs was a loving husband and father, taking care of his family and his relatives. He was a nice person, liked and highly esteemed by his friends, coworkers and students. His unreserved behaviour, witty observations made him an entertaining companion in the intermissions of scientific events. He always showed courteous attention to his partners and was ready to help in various matters. He was really a gentle and nice human being. His passing away was a great loss to everybody who knew him.

On behalf of his friends, coworkers and students we say a last farewell and offer our sincere sympathy to his wife and children.

László Szepesy