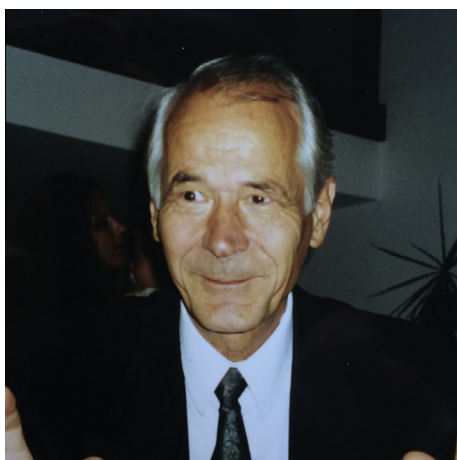




## Obituary

## In Memoriam Hanns Christian Hopf, MD (1934–2013)



Hanns Christian Hopf died on Sept. 13th, 2013 in the age of 78 years after a long battle with carcinoid cancer that extended over several decades. He is survived by his devoted wife, three children and beloved grandchildren.

Professor Hopf was born in Hamburg in 1934. After completing his medical studies in Freiburg and Hamburg and writing his doctoral thesis on C reactive protein in the cerebrospinal fluid in 1959, he performed his training in clinical neurology at the University Würzburg. He was academically promoted (“habilitation”) in 1965 to become “Privatdozent.” His thesis proved to be one of the earliest descriptions of the nervous system involvement in acrodermatitis chronica atrophicans (Herxheimer disease), the European form of Lyme disease. At the time the causative role of *Borrelia* infections was not yet known although the sensitivity to penicillin had already been noted. His observations were subsequently published as a monograph in 1966.

In 1969 he joined the Neurology faculty at the University of Göttingen and in 1976 he was appointed Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurology of the University of Mainz where he remained until his retirement in 2001.

His international collaborations, especially in clinical neurophysiology, began early in his career. He visited R. Magun in Berne, Switzerland in 1959 and F. Buchthal in Copenhagen, Denmark, in the same year. In 1972 he spent research time with R.W. Gilliatt and R.G. Willison in London at the Queen’s Square National Hospital. Later, he and his faculty in Mainz did collab-

orative research with L. Gutmann, West Virginia University, for many years.

He was a dedicated clinical neurologist with a special interest in clinical neurophysiology. He published many original articles in the field of electromyography including the first German textbook on electromyography, jointly with A. Struppler, in 1976. This book was republished several times. He was preparing the next edition at the time of his death.

His publications included basic articles on the refractory period and neuromuscular transmission. He first described the collision technique to investigate the spectrum of nerve conduction velocities in different sized motor axons, often referred to as the Hopf collision technique. He was one of the first investigators to measure muscle fiber conduction velocity and muscle contraction times in various conditions.

Using various electrophysiological techniques and MRI, an important area of his research dealt with defining the various brainstem syndromes that often involved a single cranial nerve or discrete pathways. His investigations showed conclusively that small lacunar lesions in the brain stem could result in isolated cranial nerve palsies including pupillary sparing third nerve palsies. These studies remain a tribute to his scientific prowess and have been described in a series of articles, book chapters and monographs culminating in his book entitled, “Brainstem Localization and Function,” co-authored with L.R. Caplan in 1992. His international reputation in this field finally led to his election as president of the “Brain Stem Society” in 2001.

He was the co-founder of the popular German journal “Aktuelle Neurologie” and co-edited the multi-volume standard neurological text book “Neurologie in Praxis und Klinik” which has appeared in several editions. He was honored by the German Society of Neurology for clinical and scientific contributions to neurology with the prestigious Max-Nonne-Medal in 2004.

He was president of the German Society of Clinical Neurophysiology, the former German EEG-Society, and a member of the executive board over several periods. For his achievements in the field of clinical neurophysiology he was awarded the “Hans-Berger-Preis” in 1976.

Hopf’s mentoring skills were extraordinary. His trainees and fellow faculty included such important academic neurologists as K. Lowitzsch, W. Nix, R. Besser, G. Krämer, B. Tettenborn, P. Urban, F. Thömke and T. Vogt. He had the ability to transfer his enthusiasm for neurology and neurophysiology to his colleagues and students, creating a uniquely productive and collegial atmosphere in his department. He was a highly respected clinical teacher, a compassionate and empathetic physician and a fatherly friend to his

young coworkers. A few weeks before he died his former colleagues and trainees honored him at a reception, not knowing that this would be their farewell.

For those that knew him well, Hanns Christian Hopf was respected as a fine clinician, researcher, and teacher as well as a keen observer. His article published in *Neurology*, 1992, describing the preventive effect of serotonin on his migraine headaches at the time his carcinoid tumor first appeared was typical of him. He was a modest and unpretentious colleague who was always thoughtful and caring of those around him. We have lost an outstanding member of the neurological community.

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