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by Marianne C. Kastrup, MD, PhD and Wolfgang Rutz, MD, PhD

Per Bech became specialist in psychiatry in 1978, and in 1991 he got appointed as professor of clinical psychiatry at Odense University, Denmark. It was however as Head of the Research Unit, Mental Health Centre Northern Zealand, that he spent most of his career. He was appointed as consultant in 1981 and later he was called by the Copenhagen University as professor of Clinical Psychometrics, a discipline that he himself had developed. Per Bech continued his high research activity as a professor until his death.

His research was mainly concentrated on the development and validation of rating scales. In 1981 he defended his thesis: Rating Scales for Affective Disorders: Their Validity and Consistency.

Later he published a comprehensive work titled: Rating Scales for Psychopathology, Health Status and Quality of Life followed by a number of books on clinical psychometrics. His diligence was legendary, and he published more than 400 peer reviewed papers as well as many books and book chapters.

Per Bech did for more than 50 years belong to the European group of advanced frontier professionals influencing mental health - and psychiatric development. His efforts have influenced diagnostic development and have until recently decisively changed and adapted psychiatry and mental health support to scientific and clinic reality.

Per Bech has had many international posts. He was elected as President of the European Psychiatric Association (EPA) in 1993 and was during his Presidency 1993-1994 responsible for the first very successful EPA congress in Copenhagen in 1994 later followed by an EPA Congress in Copenhagen in 1998. Furthermore, he had decisive influence on changing the working language to English and contributed significantly to the development of EPA.

During the period 1987-1991 he was Secretary General of European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP). He was one of the earliest leading European professionals in the International College of Neuropsychopharmacology (CINP) and became its Secretary General 1998-2002. He was one of the founding fathers of the International Committee for Prevention and Treatment of Depression. He was active in the Danish university antidepressant group (DUAG) and only recently he became interested and intended publishing on principals of positive psychiatry, of which he saw the Gotland study - one of the PTD committees more known research products - to be an excellent example of.

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Per Bech's contact to the WHO was intensive and fruitful. He created at his Research Unit one of WHO's most important European Collaboration Centres 1995-2005, mostly dedicated to depression, quality of life and stress, psychometrics and diagnostical assessments. He created, coordinated and disseminated one of WHO's important assessment product, the WHO 5 wellbeing scale and was responsible for much of its scientific validation. He even co - authored and promoted the English version of the Gotland male depression scale (GMDS). These were only some of the numerous highlights and incitements Per Bech gave to us. He was a warm-hearted person, a good and loyal friend, an excellent researcher, analytical scientist and humanistically minded clinician. He will stay in our minds and the results of his work and thinking will last and be effective for a long time ahead. May he rest in peace.

Marianne C. Kastrup, MD, PhD

Former EPA Secretary General

Former Chair of the EPA Ethics Committee

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