

In memoriam

Erik Strömgren

On March 15, 1993, Erik Strömgren died at the age of 83 in Risskov, Denmark, after a short severe illness. Until few days before his death, he was engaged in the analysis of the data from a follow-up study which he had personally undertaken 50 years after his first population study on the island of Bornholm.

Erik Strömgren was one of the most outstanding European psychiatrists of our time. He commenced very early to conduct epidemiological studies from which he obtained decisive knowledge about untreated morbidity in the general population and about the natural course of psychiatric disorders. He furnished substantial contributions to the validation and further development of the Kraepelinean classification system of psychiatric disorders and to three revisions of ICD (ICD-8, 9, 10). In 1959 he was appointed Consultant in Mental Health to the World Health Organization; in 1965 he became Chairman of the newly designated WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health in Aarhus. Because of his merits in improving psychiatric classification he was made the chairman of the Section Committee on Nomenclature and Classification of the World Psychiatric Association.

Already in 1935, his engagement in epidemiological psychiatry led him to the Kraepelin-founded Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Psychiatry in Munich, where Bruno Schultz and Hans Luxemburger as well as Franz Kallmann stimulated his interest in genetic epidemiology. In the following time Erik Strömgren provided essential contributions to population genetics of psychiatric disorders and in particular of functional psychoses. With the ambi-

tious methodology of his studies and his clear and ideology-free attitude, he helped to develop genetic epidemiology and psychiatry in the critical phase following the Second World War. One of his epidemiological contributions is the improvement of Weinberg's method of age correction for familial risks of mental disorders.

Erik Strömgren's research work is extraordinarily broad. It comprises more than 400 publications and a textbook of psychiatry which appeared in 13 editions and is used in all Scandinavian countries. As head of the Aarhus University Mental Hospital, an office which he was appointed to at the age of 35 years, Erik Strömgren also was a devoted physician. He founded one of the first psychiatric liaison services; very early he organized the integration of mental health care into primary care. He committed himself to the reform of mental health care, and because of his excellent knowledge of epidemiological and services research he was a highly estimated adviser to the Danish and numerous foreign governments. Erik Strömgren's clear style avoiding redundancy and the originality of his scientific thinking made him one of the most outstanding speakers and discussants at numerous international conferences. Several honorary doctorates and many other honours were conferred on him, including the Kraepelin gold medal in 1976 and the Stanley R. Dean Award in 1993.

With his work and his personality Erik Strömgren set landmarks. The European Psychiatry mourns for him. His death has left a great void.

Heinz Häfner