

OBITUARY



Obituary to Prof.h.c. Dr. Drs.h.c. mult. Paul Janssen

We regret that we have to inform that Paul Janssen passed away on November 11, 2003.

Paul Janssen was a honorary member of the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Biologische Psychiatrie”.

Paul Janssen was born in Belgium in 1926. The son of a physician, he entered medical school at the University of Ghent and received his M.D. in 1951.

After his graduation, Janssen was drafted and spent 18 months as a military physician with the Belgian army in Germany. It was during this period that he studied medicinal chemistry and pharmacology.

Returning home, he joined the pharmaceutical company of his father, founded in 1935. The family enterprise was manufacturing a variety of drugs and was relatively successful, but had no research and no chemical manufacturing at this time.

At a tender age of 27 Paul Janssen became president of the company and introduced research to develop better, original and patentable products. During his tenure between 1953 and 1991 Janssen Pharmaceutica, a research company, developed over 70 compounds of which five were admitted to the list of “essential drugs” of the World Health Organization. Paul Janssen himself holds over 100 patents as the inventor of drugs.

As the director of research of his company, within a short period of five years, Paul Janssen developed many important psychotropic drugs.

Haloperidol was one of his pioneer developments. By the early 1960's it was used for the treatment of psychomotor agitation and psychoses in most Western European countries. The importance of haloperidol, Paul Janssen's first major contribution to the treatment of mental illness, can not be overstated. More than 40 years after its discovery haloperidol has remained one of the most effective and reliable substances in the treatment of schizophrenia and in the management of psychosis.

In the years which followed, Paul Janssen with his associates developed numerous other drugs, from pimozide and penfluridol, through droperidol and benperidol, to dipiperone and risperidone, which have contributed to the treatment of psychiatric patients. They also discovered several highly potent and specific ligands for G-protein coupled receptors. These compounds have become important tools for research aiming at a better understanding of how the brain and its complex system of neurotransmitters and receptors work.

Paul Janssen's research had a major impact on the development of our current understanding and treatment of mental illness, and especially of schizophrenia. Paul Janssen did not perceive schizophrenia as “one diseases entity”; he was the first to systematically employ tests for both amphetamine

and tryptamine antagonism, in the screening for substances to be explored in the treatment of schizophrenia.

Paul Janssen was the recipient of numerous scientific prizes and awards, he held several national honouree degrees and orders around the world. He published more than 850 scientific articles.

He always had a special relationship to Germany and German psychiatry. From 1950 to 1952 he worked as an assistant at the Institute of Pharmacology at the University of Cologne. Two of his honorary doctorates are from German Universities, from the Faculty in Nature Sci-

ence, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt/Main and from the Medical Faculty of the Heinrich-Heine University, Düsseldorf.

The international scientific community and the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Biologische Psychiatrie” has lost one of the most outstanding scientists of the 20th Century.

Prof. Dr. Norbert Müller
President of the German Society
for Biological Psychiatry