

Obituary Professor Dr. Jürgen Wendler



Professor Dr. Jürgen Wendler, Emeritus Professor of Phoniatrics at Charité Berlin, passed away on 5 March 2025 at the age of 95. He is regarded as the doyen of phoniatrics in Germany and was a highly esteemed representative of the field worldwide for decades.

Jürgen Wendler was born in Dresden in 1930. He studied medicine at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg and completed his doctorate in 1954. After initially working as an ENT specialist in Berlin, he trained as a phoniatrician under Prof. Wolfgang Pfau at the University Hospital in Halle. From 1963 to 1969, he founded and headed the Phoniatric Department at Prenzlauer Berg Hospital in Berlin, interrupted in 1965 by a study period at the Phoniatric University Department under Prof. Miloslav Seeman in Prague. In 1969, he habilitated at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

In 1969, he took over the Phoniatric department founded by Hermann Gutzmann Sr. in 1905 at the Charité hospital in Berlin, which he headed until 1995 and led to new heights. 1978 he went to the University of Florida to study with Prof Harry Hollien. In 1982, Prof Wendler was appointed full professor and, after the reunification of Germany, was appointed to the C4 Chair of Phoniatrics at the Charité in Berlin in 1993.

Jürgen Wendler served as treasurer and later secretary general of the Union of European Phoniatricians from 1973 to 1992, in which capacity he made the discipline internationally recognised. He was a founding member of the European Academy of Phoniatrics and the International Association of TransVoice Surgeons and board member of numerous international phoniatric organisations for many years.

Over 300 publications, mainly on voice and phonosurgery, attest to his outstanding scientific oeuvre. He was one of the pioneers in the development of phonosurgery and was the first surgeon to perform pitch-raising voice surgery on trans women in the late 1980s. This procedure is still the standard operation for voice feminisation today and is known

worldwide as 'Wendler glottoplasty'. Twelve international societies have honoured his outstanding life's work with honorary memberships.

Jürgen Wendler was a role model for several generations of phoniatricians in Germany and Europe. His enormous knowledge and medical skills, rhetorical brilliance, professional and political commitment to phoniatrics, and sense of humour inspired, encouraged, and shaped us on our professional paths. We are very grateful to him for this. We will honour his memory.

Dirk Mürbe and Tadeus Nawka, Haldun Oguz, Ahmed Geneid

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