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In memoriam

Berta Scharrer
1906–1995

We were very saddened to learn of the death of Professor Berta Scharrer, to whom we were deeply devoted. Berta Scharrer, member of the Editorial Board of *Cell and Tissue Research* since 1960, died in New York on July 23, 1995, at the age of 88. Her editorial contribution to our journal has been outstanding with regard to both quality and quantity, and her dedication has been greatly admired. Her co-editors and the authors were always impressed by the broad spectrum of her knowledge and her keen evaluation of the quality of scientific communications. We recognize that this ability reflects an unusual perception into the basis of natural science and is evidence of an exceptional personality.

The scientific career of Berta Scharrer has been crowned with great success. The concept of neurosecretion developed by Ernst and Berta Scharrer between 1928 and 1937, and later extended by Wolfgang Bargmann, forms the foundation for contemporary neuroendocrinology, particularly the concept of peptidergic neurons in vertebrates and invertebrates. There are very few scientists whose discoveries have marked the advent of a new discipline, and especially one that has continued to grow. During the last decade Berta Scharrer was fascinated by the interrelationships between the neuroendocrine system and the immune apparatus. It is amazing to see to what extent new molecular evidence has been integrated into the original framework of the concept of neurosecretion.

The idea of a secretory activity of nerve cells was so revolutionary that it originally met with considerable opposition. Today we know that secretory nerve cells are widely distributed over the central and the peripheral nervous systems, including the autonomic nervous system. Berta Scharrer was one of the early defenders of the unifying concept of a diffuse neuroendocrine system. The glandular capacity of the brain has now become a common insight. The neuropeptides whose chemical nature has largely been deciphered serve both in vertebrates and invertebrates for the maintenance of the organism and for the preservation of the species.

Berta Vogel Scharrer was born on December 1, 1906, in Munich. She studied zoology at the University of Munich. Her early scientific work in the laboratory of Karl von Frisch, the later Nobel Laureate, was concerned with chemoreception in bees. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Munich in 1930. She then became research associate at the Research Institute for Psychiatry in Munich (1931–1934) and at the Neurological Institute (Edinger Institute) in Frankfurt-am-Main (1934–1937). The years in Frankfurt were of particular importance; during this period the concept of neurosecretion was formulated in its definitive form. After Ernst and Berta Scharrer had left Germany in 1937, Chicago, New York, Cleveland and Denver became their further academic and scientific stations. From 1955 to 1977 Berta Scharrer was Professor of Anatomy at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. In 1978, she became Distinguished Professor Emerita of Anatomy and Structural Biology and of Neuroscience.

The international recognition for the scientific achievements of Berta Scharrer has been mirrored by the honors she has received. Eleven universities have bestowed honorary doctorates upon her, including Harvard University. Among her numerous medals and prizes only a few will be mentioned here: the Kraepelin Gold Medal of the Max Planck Society (1978), the Schleiden Medal of the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina (1983), and the National Medal of Science of the United States of America (1985). Berta Scharrer was a member of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, and several other European academies and scientific societies.

Berta Scharrer was admired for her integrity, modesty, warmth and her willingness to help. Her devotion to humanitarian goals has earned our special respect and esteem. We are indeed most privileged to have known her. She will long be remembered by her friends and colleagues.

On behalf of the Editors and the Publisher,

A. Oksche