

Obituary

Professor Jørgen Søndergaard, Denmark



Professor Jørgen Søndergaard, born 1937 in Ålborg, passed away on February 6th, 2006, in Thailand in the age of only 68. He graduated from university in 1965 and specialized in dermatovenereology in 1974. He was appointed chief physician at Rigshospitalet Department of Dermatology H, Copenhagen the same year, only 37-years old. His scientific interest was focused on mediators of inflammation and prostaglandins. He contributed significantly to the development of this field which at that time was in its infancy. Søndergaard studied for a period in London, St. Johns in the laboratory of Malcolm Greaves, and later at the Stanford University, USA. His medical thesis from 1973 was on prostaglandins. In 1975, Søndergaard was appointed professor of dermatology of Copenhagen University and chief physician of the newly established department of dermatology at Hvidovre Hospital, located in the suburbs of Copenhagen. He continued his work on prostaglandins in co-operation with Dr. Vibeke Kassis. The Hvidovre Hospital department was in 1983, incorporating the old dermatology department of the Copenhagen Municipal Hospital, moved to the present location at Bispebjerg Hospital.

Søndergaard now chaired the leading department of dermatovenereology of Copenhagen City, which also included the old Rudolf Berg Hospital in the heart of the city, housing a huge and well established clinic of venereology. In the early days of AIDS, a disease of unidentified aetiology, fatal outcome and fear, this downtown clinic of venereology had a key role in the diagnosis, research, prevention and encapsulation of this severe disease, which could not be treated medically. In 1988, Søndergaard was honored with the American International Award of AIDS. In 1994, at the age of 57, Søndergaard



Fig. 2. Jørgen Søndergaard in Pattaya, Thailand, three months before he passed away.

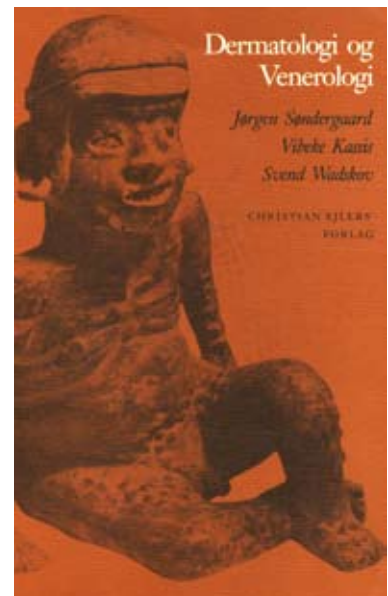


Fig. 3. Textbook *Dermatologi og Venerologi* (in Danish), 1980, used in the specialist education in Denmark, editors Søndergaard, Kassis and Wadskov.

accepted a position as chief dermatologist of the Al Mafraq University Hospital, Abu Dhabi. His skills as an administrator opened for an influential position as medical director of the whole hospital. He engaged with the organization of an entirely new hospital, when a stroke affected him and necessitated his early retirement. The last years were shared between his domicile in Pattaya, Thailand and his summer house in Ærø, Denmark. Professor Søndergaard was by nature modest, gentle, balanced and of good will, a faithful and tolerant coach of his team, which not in any case offered him easy conditions for leadership and decision. He was felt missed by Danish dermatologists, when he left for Abu Dhabi in 1994, only 2 years before the physical incorporation of Rigshospital, Department of Dermatology H in the Bispebjerg



Fig. 4. Reception, retirement of Professor Axel Perdrup (middle), with his successor, Professor Jørgen Søndergaard (left), 1975.



Fig. 6. Bispebjerg Hospital Department of Dermato-venereology, out patient clinic.

Hospital, Department of Dermato-venereology, which then became the largest department of the specialty in Denmark housing a broad range of subspecialties. The professional life of Jørgen Søndergaard is the history of the Bispebjerg department. Jørgen Søndergaard was the founding chairman. It was not really under-

stood why Danish dermatology since 1994 lost the contact with Jørgen Søndergaard, who had mastered so prominent positions in the specialty during difficult years of change and challenge.

Jørgen Serup
chief editor



Fig. 5. Jørgen Søndergaard giving a speech, addressing a new doctor of his laboratory.



Fig. 7. Bispebjerg Hospital Department of Dermato-venereology at springtime, as seen from the garden.