

## OBITUARY

### Professor Olle Höök 1918–2006



#### Olle Höök: founder of the Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine

Olle Höök passed away on 19 October 2006, just before his 88th birthday. He founded the *Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine* and the Foundation for Rehabilitation Information in 1968, together with leading physicians from the Nordic countries. He was Editor-in-Chief of the journal until the end of 1998, when he became Honorary Editor. The journal was initiated to promote research and scientific writing in Scandinavia, but rapidly became known worldwide, and now has a very good international reputation. This achievement was thanks in no small part to Olle Höök's many international contacts and his participation in a large number of international scientific meetings and organizations. The increasing number of subscribers and submissions from all over the world led to the journal being re-named *Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine* in 2001.

In 1997 a supplement to the journal listed all the papers and supplements published during the period 1969–93; the first 25 years of the journal. This showed what an immense load Olle Höök took on and made a success of as Editor, in producing a total of 30 volumes and 39 supplements. This work has made Scandinavian rehabilitation research well-known all over the world, and has contributed significantly to the international development of this area. We, his successors, have an important inheritance to continue. He also followed the development of the journal carefully until the last part of his life.

Olle Höök began his career in neurology at Serafimerlasarettet in Stockholm. There he initiated the first special unit for patients with spinal cord injury in Sweden, and became its head in 1963. Soon afterwards he enlarged his responsibility for rehabilitation medicine, when in 1966 he was awarded the

first chair in Medical Rehabilitation in Sweden, at Göteborg University. It was impressive to experience his devoted efforts to gain respect for rehabilitation, both as a scientific and a clinical specialty. He developed the first university department in rehabilitation in Sweden and was, at the same time, active in starting a school for occupational therapy and physiotherapy with teachers connected with the faculty of medicine. On the clinical side, a rehabilitation department was created, providing both in-patient and out-patient facilities for patients with a range of conditions, such as brain injury, stroke, spinal cord injury, amputation, pain and back problems, and for training after cardiac infarction. He combined good clinical knowledge with a social and humanistic attitude to rehabilitation, always keeping the patient at the centre. He also started a unit for habilitation of young adults with inborn or early acquired lesions, patients with cerebral palsy being the largest group. This was a new approach for Sweden, providing continuity from the units for habilitation of children.

Olle Höök was Chairman of the Swedish Society for Rehabilitation and Physical Medicine 1967–80, and Scientific Advisor to the Swedish Board of Health and Welfare 1967–84. He was a member of both the Advisory Council of the World Rehabilitation Fund 1977–90 and the Executive Committee of the Research Group in Neurological Rehabilitation of the World Federation of Neurology. In 1980 the 8<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine was arranged in Stockholm with Olle Höök as honorary president.

Olle Höök had many talents; he was head of the department and gained great respect in that position, but at the same time he showed great empathy with and personal interest in his

colleagues. His generosity also took the form of a donation to the Swedish Society of Medicine for research into rehabilitation medicine, thanks to the success of one of his valuable innovations for patient care.

He enjoyed travelling, and attended many scientific meetings, often accompanied by a member of his family. Most of all, however, he enjoyed being with nature in the mountains and seashore of Sweden. Brought up in the northern part of Sweden he was an excellent mountaineer and cross-country skier; he could advise on good tracks and had great interest in and knowledge of botany. He swam regularly in the mornings, even at an advanced age. From parties we remember his spirituality and his store of good stories, which were well chosen for different occasions.

Olle Höök became well-known all over the world, and at a recent international meeting, participants enquired about his health

and sent greetings, which sadly he never received. All those who met him will keep his memory close to their hearts. His work will have an important impact for a long time. We were his last co-workers, together with the Editorial Staff of the *Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine*, and we are especially grateful for the time we had together and the friendships that developed.

*Göteborg, Uppsala and Linköping, November 2006*

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