

Miomir Cvek (1927–2008)

OBITUARY



Miomir Cvek passed away on 20 June 2008 after several years of severe illness and thus ended a remarkable scientific career intimately linked to pediatric dentistry, endodontics and dental traumatology.

Prof Cvek had a very unusual life. He was born in Croatia in 1927 and during the Second World War he became a member of the resistance movement. He joined the Yugoslav partisans in the people's Liberation War which ultimately resulted in Yugoslavia becoming a free nation. He finished high school after the war and continued to study medicine and stomatology at the University of Zagreb in 1955. To make a career at that time in Yugoslavia one had to be a member of the communist party. Prof Cvek refused and opted instead to move to the Eastman Institute in Sweden where he got a position in the pediatric dentistry department in 1959. He was appointed professor in Zagreb, Faculty of Stomatology in 1994.

Prof Cvek will in the future be remembered for his detailed and analytic studies on pulp and periodontal healing after dental trauma. All his studies are characterized by being very accurate and meticulously performed and with a strong eye for linking his findings to biology.

Early in his career at the Eastman Institute, he became interested in endodontic problems associated with traumatized teeth with open apices. He was instrumental in discovering how calcium hydroxide can be used to promote apical healing by inducing an apical barrier. Several clinical histological and bacteriological studies have since demonstrated the value of this method. This discovery led to a doctoral thesis which he successfully defended at Lund University in Sweden in 1974.

He recognized early on the value of preserving pulpal health in traumatized teeth. Usually, vital pulp therapy included removal of the routine coronal pulp (pulpotomy), but Prof Cvek was interested in preserving as much pulp tissue as possible and believed that a partial pulpotomy would be more beneficial. That popularized the procedure and subsequently became known as the 'Cvek pulpotomy' or a 'Cvek-type pulpotomy'. It became widely promoted and it is probably safe to say that through Prof Cvek's effort, thousands perhaps millions of teeth around the world have been saved after having suffered pulpal exposure during dental trauma.

In 1980, Prof Cvek was a visiting professor in South Africa (Johannesburg and Cape town); several stays between 1981 and 1993 resulted in new studies on pulp revascularization in monkeys and the relation to antibiotic

treatment, as well as pulp responses to various capping procedures. On returning from South Africa, he took up clinical studies on root fractures and collected a very large amount of material, which was subsequently published, outlining the determining factors for healing of root fractures. Other ground-breaking studies worth mentioning are his clinical studies on tooth replantation and pulp canal obliteration.

At the Eastman Institute, under his supervision, the new method of decoronation was developed for saving alveolar bone in relation to progressively resorbing anterior teeth. In 1994, he finished his chapter on endodontic treatment in the *Text Book and Color Atlas of Traumatic injuries* which in 58 pages described all the endodontic aspects of dental trauma and became a milestone in dental traumatology. At the age of 80, he revised and rewrote his chapter in the latest edition of this book.

After his official retirement in 1992 from the position as the head of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry at the Eastman Institute, he continued uninterrupted as a full-time non-paid researcher at the age of 65. His main interest then turned to research on the long-term fate of root fractures, a study which was successfully finished just before his death.

Prof Cvek received recognition on several occasions for his extraordinary contributions to dentistry and dental traumatology. In 1994, he was honored by the IADT with its first certificate of appreciation. In 2003, he received the Ralph Summer Award from the American Association of Endodontists for his publications in vital pulp therapy.

It is with great sadness that we recognize Miomir is no longer among us. He was unusually gifted and had an unparalleled amount of energy which he directed toward existing clinical and laboratory research. Being a collaborator on some of his projects, I will always remember his rational mind trying to find logical biological explanations to complicated phenomena.

He will be remembered for a long time for his unselfish contribution to the advancement of dental traumatology.

Jens Ove Andreasen DDS, Odont.Dr h.c.

Resource Center for Rare Oral Diseases
Department of Oral and Maxillo-Facial Surgery
The University Hospital of Copenhagen, Denmark

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