

## N E C R O L O G I O / O B I T U A R Y

**Dr. Maths Berlin**

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Professor emeritus MD, PhD Maths Berlin on January 26, 2015 at the age of 83.

Dr. Berlin presented his doctoral thesis on mercury toxicology in 1963 at Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm. He was an Associate professor and deputy head of the department of Environmental health at the National Institute of Public Health 1963-1967. During this time, he also spent a year as a visiting professor at the University of Rochester in Rochester, NY, USA where he worked together with one of us (TWC). In 1967 he was appointed as a full professor of environmental medicine and chairman of the Department of Environmental Hygiene at the University of Lund in Lund Sweden. His doctoral thesis and his subsequent experimental research was pioneering in introducing a scientific approach to understanding metal metabolism. Important fundamental toxicological differences among various chemical forms of mercury were demonstrated. This information has been of great importance within metal toxicology and human health risk assessment. In Lund his research in environmental medicine also included research on benzene and sleep disturbances from noise in addition to his experimental research on mercury. Maths Berlin was engaged and instrumental in getting WHO approval for the epidemiological studies on prenatal exposures to methyl mercury from fish consumption in the Seychelles. This research has been performed mainly by the University of Rochester team of scientists and continues to this day. Even in the last year of his life, Dr Berlin was actively performing research on another aspect of mercury toxicology namely the immunological effects in humans of mercury released in dental practice.

Dr Berlin was on leave from Lund University from 1983-88 when he worked for the World Health Organization (WHO) at the MARC Monitoring and Assessment Centre, University of London, UK. He served as chairman or member of a number of WHO criteria documents on metals during this period.

Dr. Berlin served ICOH for many decades. He was one of the founding members of The Scientific Committee on the Toxicology of Metals (SCTM) under the International Commission on Occupational Health inaugurated in 1969 and he participated in a number of international workshops organized by SCTM where research results were summarized and consensus conclusions were published as books and reports. These reports have had a major influence on the development of risk assessment methods in occupational and environmental medicine and public health. The international impact of these methods on regulations for the control of chemicals released into the environment cannot be understated. In the last year of his life Dr Berlin completed the new chapter on Mercury for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Handbook on the Toxicology of Metals, this book being an important joint effort by members of SCTM.

In summary, the SCTM has lost a long term committee member who made many valuable scientifically based contributions to our discussions and joint publications. We, who were honored to know and collaborate with him, will remember him as a great scientist and a reliable and good friend.

On behalf of the SCTM  
**Lars Barregard, Monica Nordberg, Bruce Fowler,  
Gunnar Nordberg, Thomas W. Clarkson**