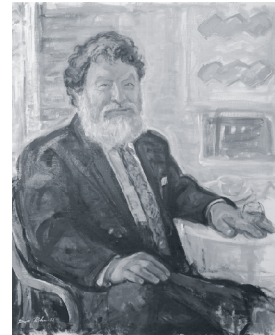


Kimmo Mustakallio

* 7/7/1931 † 15/8/2016



KIMMO KALEVA MUSTAKALLIO, emeritus professor of dermatology and venereal diseases, died on 15th August 2016 at the age of 85 years after a brief illness. Born into a family of physicians, Kimmo Mustakallio acquired a knowledge of classical languages in his schooldays such that he was able to read the works of the Greek philosophers and playwrights in the original language. He qualified in medicine in 1956, completed his specialization in dermatology and venereal diseases in 1965 and gained a doctorate in medicine in 1966. He was appointed professor of dermatology and venereal diseases at the University of Helsinki in 1968, at the age of only 37 years, and held that position until his retirement in 1994. At the same time he served as chief physician of the Department of Dermatology and Venereal Diseases at Helsinki University Hospital, originally at its historical site in Snellmaninkatu and for the last two years at the new Skin and Allergy Hospital in Meilahti, the design and construction of which was his last major undertaking as head of the department.

Kimmo Mustakallio's scientific career began during his student days, with a paper in the journal *Duodecim* on the func-

tioning of the thymus, which remains a topic of interest even today. Alongside his actual medical studies he was also interested in chemistry, and at the same time as he was working for his doctorate he developed, among other things, a quantitative method for the determination of calcium based on the use of chelates. His thesis as such was concerned with antibodies to *Staphylococcus* bacteria (the ASTA test) and the significance of *Staphylococcus* infections for atopic dermatitis and psoriasis. A large proportion of his published works were concerned with histochemistry, although he was also interested in autoimmune diseases and the immunity mechanisms involved in them. At a later stage his interest in chemistry led him to consider the development of anthralin derivatives for the topical treatment of psoriasis, e.g. in a home environment. Eventually his collaboration with researchers in the Orion pharmaceuticals company led to the marketing of a paraffin-based preparation known as Ditrastick for the outpatient and home treatment of psoriasis. The development of a butantron derivative that caused less irritation and coloration of the skin was also an outcome of his re-

search. His internationally most intensively cited paper was that concerning suction blister methodology produced in collaboration with Docent Urpo Kiistala and published in *The Lancet* in 1964. This only mildly invasive procedure was subsequently used in a large number of human dermatological studies until very recent times.

Kimmo Mustakallio's career was characterized by both a great breadth of knowledge and experience and a great depth of understanding in those matters that interested him most. He followed the scientific literature in his fields of interest avidly and comprehensively and distributed copies of papers published internationally to the young research students in his department on a weekly basis, usually with a comment containing a new, imaginative idea on how the method concerned could be adopted for departmental use. This attitude on the part of our head of department made research attractive for us and helped us to work together well. Once a year we were asked for suggestions for new laboratory equipment, and these were usually granted. During the planning of the new Skin and Allergy Hospital we were allowed to design a separate research laboratory with cell culture facilities, and this has been of the utmost importance for the department's more recent research. This laboratory was also engaged in antibody research in connection with the outbreak of the HIV epidemic, and the first biopsy of a Kaposi's sarcoma to be taken in connection with a HIV infection was obtained and examined in the department's own dermatopathology laboratory.

Kimmo Mustakallio was a founding member of the European Society for Der-

matological Research (ESDR) and was invited to membership of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1973. He received the Swedish Sven Hellenström Medal in 1979 and the Pohjola Prize in 1998.

As a clinician and head of department Kimmo Mustakallio was a jovial character with a good sense of humour, but he was also demanding in his own way. His daily rounds in the four large wards of the hospital were accomplished at speed, as he was an excellent clinician and remembered each individual patient's condition precisely. It was then left to the resident to recall the details for each patient and to summarize them in a couple of minutes. There was no time to consult papers or a computer! You could always speak with Kimmo when necessary, but once he had closed his eyes you knew that everything essential had been said. He used to lecture with his eyes closed as well, without it detracting at all from the brilliance of the performance!

As a person Kimmo Mustakallio was straight out of the Renaissance. Music was very important to him and he enjoyed listening to it immensely, his interest in art and the theatre he owed to his wife, the late actress Marita Nordberg, and after his retirement he studied to become an excellent painter in watercolours. He was a brilliant speaker at academic gatherings and on department journeys to conferences, and naturally always had suitable Latin quotations available and was acquainted with the history of the places we visited. He also wrote Haiku poetry (examples, see page 84).

One extremely important feature of Kimmo Mustakallio's character was his humane and sympathetic attitude towards

those working in the department. We were “one family” and the spirit that existed amongst us was excellent. He had a natural charisma as a leader.

Just a few months before he passed away he sent me a text message, “I will be setting out on a ferry across the water – without a return ticket.”

*Obituary by
Annamari Ranki*

*Picture:
Portrait of Kimmo Mustakallio
painted by Eeva Rihu*

Kaislaveneitä

*Pohjassa piilee
jossakin kaislavene,
jonka lapsena
lähetin luovimaan ja
etsimään onneani*

*Laineilla liittää
vieläkin kaislavene
jonka lapsena
annoin tuulien viedä
etsimään onneansa.*

- Kimmo Mustakallio

Minuuden synty

*En tiedä milloin
minä synnyin minuksi;
itsenäiseksi
sinuksi itselleni
ja sinuksi muillekin*

- Kimmo Mustakallio