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Zoltan Patay, MD, PhD (1957–2022)

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Zoltan Patay, MD, PhD (1957–2022)

On July 23, 2022, we lost our beloved colleague, master clinician, teacher, scientist, mentor, global citizen, and foremost exceptional friend, Zoltan Patay. He passed away in Hungary, the country where he was born, a country that always remained his home base, his happy place, and a place where he frequently returned to celebrate life with those who meant the most to him: his wife Livia, his son Farkas, his daughter Eszter, and his parents.

Zoltan was born in Hungary, and attended the prestigious Fazekas Mihály High School in Budapest, known for its long tradition of excellence in mathematics and sciences. He graduated from the equally renowned research-oriented Medical School of the Semmelweis University in Budapest in 1982. After graduation, he completed residencies in neurology at the St. Stephen Hospital and Central Military Hospital in Budapest between 1982 and 1987. Zoltan subsequently expanded his formal training into the field of radiology, completing residencies in radiology between 1987 and 1992 at the Departments of Radiology of the Central Military Hospital in Budapest and the Hospital Louis Pasteur in Colmar, France. The combination of both training programs became the foundation of his career in neuroradiology.

In 1992, Zoltan accepted a position as a Specialist Registrar in Neuroradiology in the Department of Radiology of the Erasmus Hospital at the Free University of Brussels in Belgium. He enjoyed 2.5 years of the highest level of academic neuroradiology under the mentorship of Professor Danielle Balériaux. In November 1994, Zoltan returned to Hungary as the newly appointed Chair of the Department of Neuroradiology at the Central Military Hospital in Budapest. During his tenure in Budapest, he completed and successfully defended his PhD dissertation, “Applied MR-Neuroangiography,” at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. By the end of 1997, Zoltan had become recognized for his exceptional expertise in neuroradiology, which, in combination with his interest and flexibility to explore new challenges and opportunities, launched his career outside Europe.

Zoltan first embarked on an academic journey in the Middle East, where he served as Consultant Neuroradiologist and later as head of the Section of Neuroradiology in the Department of Radiology of the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Riyadh of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 1997 and 2007. During his tenure there, he became one of the most reputable experts in the imaging, discovery, and understanding of multiple inborn errors of metabolism that may affect the brain.

Ten years later, Zoltan switched continents and joined the Department of Radiologic Sciences at the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. This move again showed his incredible flexibility and eagerness to be a life-long



learner by expanding his expertise in the field of pediatric neuro-oncology. Zoltan was recruited to serve as the head the Section of Neuroradiology, and in 2016, he was selected to be the Chair of the Department of Diagnostic Imaging, a position he held with much virtue until his untimely death. His extensive training, combining a broad clinical-neurologic foundation with a deep understanding of the corresponding neuroimaging patterns, his curiosity and vision to apply advanced imaging techniques for the better understanding of pediatric neurologic diseases, and his tenures in Budapest, Colmar, Brussels, Riyadh, as well as Memphis made him a world-renowned expert in pediatric neuroradiology.

Zoltan collected all the accolades of an exceptional academic career. He published countless articles and book chapters and was recognized for his crystal-clear scientific presentations with more than 300 invited lectures at national and international scientific meetings. Zoltan received honors from multiple prestigious imaging societies, including honorary memberships in the Turkish Society of Neuroradiology, the Hungarian Society of Radiology, and the European Society of Neuroradiology.

He presented many named lectures including the Derek Harwood-Nash Lecture and the Marco Leonardi Plenary Lecture. He was honest and calm, caring and compassionate, eloquent and humble, optimistic and full of humor, a global citizen with an exceptional willingness and energy to embrace any new challenge that lay ahead of him allowing for a broad vision of life. Zoltan was a true friend. He never lost his cool, and he always took the best of what life had to offer. He was an excellent listener, curious and interested in the well-being of his colleagues and friends, always sharing his joys in life with everyone. Words cannot describe enough what a wonderful

person he was. Those who had the pleasure of knowing him were truly blessed and will keep him in fond memory.

Last, but not least, Zoltan was a true family man. He deeply loved his wonderful wife Livia and his dear children Farkas and Eszter. He was so proud of his loved ones. Zoltan epitomized what a successful life is about: family and friends, doing good and being humble, and believing in the good of humanity.

Zoltan, we will miss you forever, we will never forget you.

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