Shlomo Stern (1928–2013) – Visionary Leader with Great Legacy in Memoriam

Professor Shlomo Stern at XV ISHNE Congress in Timisoara, Romania, in May 2013

In the night of October 27, 2013, our dear friend Prof. Shlomo Stern died, he peacefully passed away after some weeks of severe illness. He must have felt his coming end of life, because in a telephone call of Thursday 24, 2013 he told a close friend that he was in very bad conditions and that they would not see anymore !!!

We members of ISHNE and longstanding friends of him, the whole ISHNE family, are extremely saddened and humbled by the loss of our dear colleague and leader, Shlomo Stern. Though we all feel his death to be untimely, we have to accept that at any time Shlomo's lifespan by reaching his 85th age could come to an end.

Shlomo Stern was born on February 10, 1928 in Budapest, where he grew up until his 22th year of age. After German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 and the start of destruction of Hungarian Jewish people (of the 825.000 Jewish people in Hungary 565.000 were killed in Holocaust) and the terror in his beloved home town, he was lucky enough to survive the Ghetto of Budapest and to reach Israel in winter 1949/1950, together with his later wife Nurit, who luckily escaped a Concentration Camp of the Nazis, as well. Shlomo studied Medicine at the Hebrew University of

Jerusalem and received his M.D. degree in 1958. He then became Lecturer in 1962, Senior Lecturer in 1966, Associate Professor in 1971, and Full Professor of Medicine in 1978, at the Hebrew University, and he worked clinically for 19 years at the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School in Jerusalem.

From 1962 on Shlomo Stern was a member of the staff of the Department of Cardiology at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) for 13 months, and thereafter he served several times as a Visiting Professor at this institution. Here Shlomo initiated his international scientific relationships not only with scientists in cardiovascular medicine in the US, but also with many colleagues of the rest of the scientific world. After leaving Hadassah in 1974 Dr Stern established the new Cardiology Department in a new building being built at Shaarei Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem. He then left there in 1976 to found the Cardiology Department (which he headed until 2000) at Bikur Cholim Hospital. He was elected Medical Director of Bikur Cholim in 1980 until he retired in 2004. Following these official duties Shlomo as a modest humanistic doctor, deeply committed to the Hippocratic Oath, continued to serve for his many patients until his very end of life.

Shlomo's scientific interests were atherosclerotic vascular diseases (aortic and coronary atherosclerosis) and its sequelae, in general, and the clinical significance and consequences of myocardial ischemia, in particular. When Norman J. Holter in 1961 published his new technology of transmission of the ECG from remote sources, Shlomo soon became interested in the new technology of ambulatory ECG monitoring (AEM), particularly when Bruce del Mar produced the first tape based AEM recorder systems. Together with Larry Hinkle and Elliot Corday Shlomo was one of the pioneers in testing and applying tape-based Holter ambulatory ECG monitoring

devices for clinical purposes. And in 1974 he together with Dan Tzivoni as coauthor published a landmark paper in the British Heart Journal on early detection of silent ischemic heart disease by 24-hour electrocardiographic monitoring. Over the last 40 years Shlomo investigated a broad spectrum of clinical problems related to myocardial ischemia, symptomatic or silent, and in many oral presentations he brilliantly talked about his broad experience in the field of coronary atherosclerotic disease, including the underrecognized Syndrome X.

In 1983 an International Symposium on Holter Monitoring was held in Cologne, and Shlomo Stern was invited to present a lecture on his favourite topic of silent ischemia. Unfortunately he was unable to come, and Dan Tzivoni gave this lecture. Luckily enough Shlomo could come to Cologne in 1985 to the next "International Symposium on Invasive Cardiovascular Therapy-Recent Advances and Future Developments". Yet there exists the official Poster of this meeting, on whom Shlomo's sign can be found together with the signs of other active speakers (see below).

Official poster from the 1985 International Symposium on Invasive Cardiovascular Therapy-Recent Advances and Future Developments

At this event Shlomo invited the Congress Secretary Vinzenz Hombach to come to Jerusalem to prepare the next International Symposium on Holter Monitoring, which Shlomo called the "Second International Symposium on Holter Monitoring" with him as the Congress President, suggesting that the 1983 Cologne Meeting was the first one. This meeting was the starting point for the regular bi-annual international congresses of ISHNE, and at this meeting the idea was ventilated to found a new international society that should deal with all technical and clinical aspects of noninvasive electrocardiology with emphasis on Holter longterm ECG monitoring. Those who were actively involved in the 2nd International Holter meeting in Jerusalem, despite an Israeli crisis at this time, were impressed by experiencing Shlomo's steadfast guidance to create the Holter Society whose underlying purpose (in retrospect) was to foster international academic "friends".

The International Society was then definitively founded in 1988 at the 3rd International Congress of Holter Monitoring in Vienna, the Founding Members were Shlomo Stern, Arthur J. Moss, Antonio Bayes de Luna, Harold L. Kennedy, Peter F. Cohn, Dan Tzivoni, Heinz Weber, and Vinzenz Hombach.

The first name of the Society was ISHM (International Society for Holter Monitoring), and was later on renamed to ISHNE (International Society for Holter and Noninvasive Electrocardiology). Also later on Arthur Moss drafted the bylaws and definitively settled ISHM/ISHNE as an official Society in Rochester, US. The tireless activities of Shlomo pushed the development of ISHM forward step by step, and consequently he was elected as the first President of the new Society. In addition, he was eager to have ISHM's own publication journal, so he successfully contracted the "Journal of Ambulatory Monitoring" with Taylor and Francis, UK. He became the Editor-in-Chief of this journal until the renamed Society ISHNE moved to the "Annals of Noninvasive Electrocardiology" (ANE). The new Editor-in-Chief of ANE was Arthur Moss, and Shlomo Stern served as the Co-Editor-in-Chief, both Arthur and Shlomo were responsible for the great success and widespread acceptance of the new official Journal of ISHNE.

Since ISHNE's foundation Shlomo's tireless and till his last period of life ongoing commitment to ISHNE was a great pleasure for all Officials and Members of ISHNE, and his extremely valuable contributions to all activities of ISHNE were

Vienna 1988: First Board of the Society

widely accepted and appreciated. He participated in almost all BOT-meetings of ISHNE around the world, and his oral contributions were always appropriate and welcome; he spoke, as our current President Ryszard Piotrowicz said, "quietly, wisely, and as the last one – summarizing discussions and proposing good Salomonic solutions". As Harold Kennedy stated: "we saw a joy in Shlomo's following his academic commitment and passion to ISHNE as evidenced at his last ISHNE Congress in Timisoara this year, and his continuing efforts to promote international "friends" (as he would say) and goodwill. He was steadfast in his belief that our small meetings at the time of mega-meetings were a quality venue that should not give way to financial crises or a changing technological environment. This altruism in conflict with practicality was honed by a life of adverse circumstances, which he overcame physically and mentally and shared in private conversations with those of us fortunate enough to spend private time to hear of his survival in WWII and the early days of Israel".

It should also be mentioned that Shlomo Stern – as one of the younger ISHNE members and Officials, Wojciech Zareba, summarized – had

a particular affection and responsibility for the younger people involved in electrocardiographic research. He encouraged them to write papers and send them to the Annals of Noninvasive Electrophysiology. By sending hundreds of letters Shlomo became mentor and friend to so many of them. Wojciech's personal memories of Shlomo reach back to meetings in Barcelona over 20 years ago, the meetings which they repeated several times with their gracious host Antonio Bayes de Luna. While still in Barcelona Wojciech became the Society member and he was so proud to receive the confirmation of it from Prof. Shlomo Stern. Shlomo made such an impact on many people around, encouraging and motivating them. He was always looking for new activities for the society. For the number of years Wojciech was in close communication with him regarding numerous educational sessions they have done together on behalf of ISHNE. Shlomo was like a father to the Society, he kept it together making sure that despite some difficult times the Society will thrive in the future. He remained active and faithful to the Annals of Noninvasive Electrophysiology till his last days.

Professor Shlomo Stern receives Certificate of Recognition for his contribution to the Society as Editor-in-Chief of the Annals of Noninvasive Electrophysiology (Timisoara, Romania, May 2013)

We will remember him like on this picture!

Just recently he was planning to put together another article on "Year in Electrocardiology" for our journal. Wojciech is proud to say that Shlomo was a great leader, but most importantly a great friend and his constant thinking about the society instilled in many of the younger colleagues this mission that will be carried over. Shlomo leaves a great legacy scientifically, but his last 30 years he devoted to the society resulted in great educational efforts all-over-the-world triggering a true boom of interest in noninvasive electrocardiology. Every 2 years at ISHNE congresses, we celebrate this growing interest in the field and we gain new friends in various parts of the world. His legacy will live on!!!

In summary, we knew Shlomo as a brilliant scholar, editor, lecturer and a man with a great sense of humor. His academic activities as lecturer,

teacher and scientist were widely appreciated. His modesty combined with a distinct charisma made him a person of natural authority and leadership. In private conversations we experienced his great humanity and warm personality and deep friendship.

Now we deeply miss Shlomo's academic fire, his comradely, his warm personality, his humor, and his friendship !!! We will always keep his memory in our hearts.

Vinzenz Hombach,
Harold L. Kennedy,
Arthur J. Moss,
Antonio Bayes de Luna
and Wojciech Zareba,
on behalf of Past ISHNE Presidents and ISHNE
Family