

25 years of Swiss Lung Foundation

This year Swiss Lung celebrates 25 years of fighting for healthy lungs and clean air.

At the beginning I had the idea to finance fellowships for young Swiss lung doctors. After college I myself was so grateful for my Swiss stipend to study medicine in Zurich and later for my 2- year- pulmonary fellowship at Bellevue Hospital paid for by the City of New York. In April 1988 the foundation was incorporated with the name «pro pulmone» (Latin for «the lung») and the mission to fight against tuberculosis and lung diseases and air pollution and to promote research in the theses areas. The reimbursement I got as president of Zurich Lung Association, fees from my lectures and honoraria from private patients were my financial contributions to the Foundation.

The first research grant was accorded 1994 to Karl Klingler at New York's Bellevue Hospital, the institution I had my pulmonary training 20 years earlier. He could live on it with his wife and two sons in Mt. Kisko and published together with Bill Rom, the then new chair of the department, 8 abstracts and 2 papers about tuberculosis. Returning to Switzerland, he became chief resident at my Hospital in Wald. He is actually working as partner in the pulmonary clinic of the Hirslanden Hospital in Zurich. After him unfortunately no other Swiss doctor could be encouraged to follow him to Bellevue hospital.

The next stipend helped Nino Künzli finish his PhD thesis at the University of Berkeley in California in 1996. After professorships in Los Angeles and Barcelona he is now chairing the department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Basle and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and is a renowned leader in the field of air pollution and health.

In 2003 the foundation changed its name to „Swiss Lung“with a new homepage and merged with the Hannah Lasch foundation of my predecessor in Wald. He had inherited money from his former Secretary which he had accumulated up to 315'000 sFr. When he handed it over to my as the new president of this foundation as well, he gratefully renounced his prerogative of sFr 1000 per year for scientific books!

The next two recipients were female: Silvana Rampini studied the role of Proteases in Mycobacteria in the Microbiology lab of professor Boettger in Zurich and is now an Attending for Infectious Diseases at the University Hospital in Zurich. Beatrice Lüthi, an infectious disease specialist as well, was supported for her research at the Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town with Andreas Diacon and is now heading an Aids program for Médecins Sans Frontières in KwaZulu Natal in South Africa.

The biggest engagement so far was with Jeffrey Sachs and the Earth Institute of Columbia in New York for the salary of Yanis Ben Amor from 2006 to 2011. Yanis had a PhD in Molecular Biology and is of Swiss and Tunisian nationality. As an associate research scientist at the Earth Institute he is working for the Millenium Villages in Africa now. In

these eight extremely poor areas with about 35'000 inhabitants he is directing the fight against tuberculosis, as well as AIDS and malaria. Together with Neil Schluger we follow his work in annual meetings in New York. Yanis is now an American citizen. He is currently investigating the critical role of new diagnostics, publishing and teaching in New York. We are proud to have been partners in the Millenium Villages project. By reaching 400'000 inhabitants and with total cost of 110\$ per person and year this program lowered the incidence of malaria from 43 to 11%, increased the yield of local agriculture, improved birth control and maternal health , cleaned drinking water and brought many more children to school- a great success for Africa.

Swiss Lung has helped to publish a document on "air pollution and health" by Nino Künzli in all three Swiss Languages. Swiss Lung has also supported the report of Ken Pinkerton and Bill Rom et al for the ATS on "Climate Change and Human Health" in 2012. Since 2011 Swiss Lung sponsors the "Swiss Aerosol Award" each year with sFr 10'000 for the best publication in the field of aerosol research in Switzerland.

Now we have started a great new project, again together with Neil Schluger from Columbia and the World Lung Foundation in New York: the "East African Training Initiative" in Ethiopia. It was the idea of an Ethiopian doctor working at Columbia in New York, Asqual Getany, to train lung doctors in Addis Ababa. With a population of more than 80 million and a high burden of lung disease and tuberculosis Ethiopia at the this moment has no lung specialist in the public health sector. With support from the ministry of health we started together a training program at the university hospital Black Lion in Addis with so far three fellows in January 2013. The two foundations finance all the expenses of the attending pulmonologists, mostly from the US and hopefully from Switzerland as well, and the managing team in New York. The idea is to hand over the program after three years to the until then well trained Ethiopian doctors.

In Switzerland Swiss Lung supports a new initiative of medical doctors in Zurich taking care of "Sans- Papiers" (illegal immigrants) with lung disease. With this Swiss Lung continues to fulfill its mission stated 25 years ago to train medical doctors, keep the public informed about lung health and help lung patients getting good care.