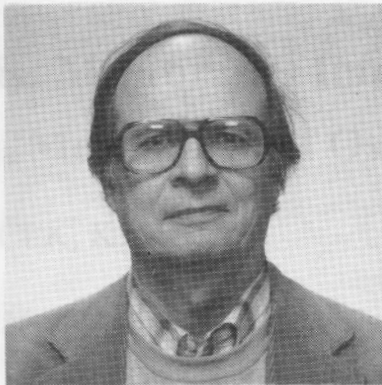


### Professor Radovan H. Žák, M.D., Ph. D. (1931-1999)



It is our sad duty to commemorate the loss of Professor R. H. Žák who passed away on September 21, 1999 at the University of Chicago Hospitals where he had been treated for several years for heart disease and died of pulmonary embolism that occurred after a surgical operation.

Radovan Žák was born in České Budějovice in Czechoslovakia on June 15, 1931 and graduated from the Natural Sciences Faculty of Charles University in 1954. He later became a Ph.D. student at the Department of Physiology and Pathophysiology of the Neuromuscular System in the Institute of Physiology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences with Prof. Ernest Gutmann as his supervisor. At that time, he mainly studied problems of protein synthesis and degradation in skeletal muscles undergoing denervation atrophy. In 1962 he published a chapter in *The Denervated Muscle*, a monograph edited by E. Gutmann, on protein changes in denervated muscles. One of his early papers concerned the release of methionine from muscle tissue and mitochondria (with Z. Drahotka) which appeared in *Nature* (1960). During this period he defended his Ph.D. thesis in biochemistry. It was already obvious at this time that he has a very promising scientific career ahead of him. In 1961 he emigrated to the United States and remained there permanently.

He began working at the Northwestern University Medical School as a research fellow and

obtained a postdoctoral fellowship in the laboratory of Professor Murray Rabinowitz in Chicago. He developed his interests in the molecular biology of cardiac contractile proteins and later became a leading authority in molecular cardiology. Two of the eight genes responsible for the various forms of myosin in cardiac and skeletal muscles were discovered in his laboratory. He was also interested in the developmental approach to cardiology; his papers belong to the classic literature in this field. He became a full professor at the University Faculty in 1978, won the Quantrall Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in 1989 and received the Golden Key for loyal and outstanding service in 1999. He was ultimately a professor in three departments: in Medicine, Pharmacology and Physiology, and Organismal Biology and Anatomy.

Radovan Žák was a member of five scientific societies, an Editorial Board Member of several journals (e.g. *American Journal of Physiology*, *Cellular and Molecular Biology Research*) and an Associate Editor of *Circulation Research*, *Journal of Molecular and Cellular Cardiology*, and *Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry*. He was also a Member of the International Advisory Board of our journal *Physiological Research*.

Professor Žák was not only a brilliant scientist but also a much appreciated and popular teacher of students and postdoctoral fellows. He was a gentle and friendly man, loved and respected by all who came into contact with him. After 1989, Radek repeatedly visited our country with the aim of helping the Boy Scouts movement which had been forbidden in the period preceding the Velvet Revolution. His help and enthusiasm was an inspiration to all those involved in this important educational field. He shall be missed not only on the international scientific scene but also by his many friends and associates in his home country.

P. Hník  
B. Ošťádal

