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Obituary for Walter Neupert

The Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry mourn the death of their colleague, biochemist Prof. Dr. Walter Neupert, who passed away on 22 June aged 79 years. Walter Neupert worked at the Institute from 2008 to 2017 as a Max Planck Fellow. Inter alia, he was awarded the Ernst Jung Medal in gold and the “Bayerischer Maximiliansorden für Wissenschaft und Kunst” in honor of his outstanding achievements in the field of the biology of mitochondria. “Walter Neupert was an exceptional scientist with a fine sense of how cells function”, says MPIB Director F.-Ulrich Hartl, a former student of Walter Neupert. “The research community have lost a highly-valued mentor and colleague.”

Walter Neupert studied chemistry and medicine at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. In 1968, he received his PhD here in the field of biochemistry. The subject of his thesis – mitochondria, the cells’ powerhouses – became his main research field throughout his scientific career. During his professorial appointments at University of Göttingen (1977-1983) and Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich (1983-2010), he studied the genesis and architecture of mitochondria with a focus on how proteins are transported through the mitochondrial membrane. Walter Neupert helped to develop biochemistry from a basic research topic into a medical research one. Mitochondrial defects lie at the bottom of numerous illnesses like cancer, heart diseases, and metabolic disorders. From 2008 on, Walter Neupert, who felt deeply attached to the Munich area, continued his research as a Max Planck Fellow at the MPI of Biochemistry in Martinsried. He had found his life’s destiny in pursuing his ideas in the lab and collaborating with young colleagues. Only a few weeks ago, he published a paper together with colleagues from Munich and Japan about a mechanism controlling the quality of proteins in mitochondria. Walter Neupert’s influence on science will continue long after his death – in the meantime, many of his students themselves have developed into leading scientists in the field of cell biology.



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT



Caption:

Walter Neupert

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