

## The Herman Musaph Award for Psychodermatology

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In 1995 the Herman Musaph Foundation for Psychodermatology was established in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The Foundation commemorates Herman Musaph, psychiatrist and one of the founding fathers of psychodermatology. The primary aim of the Foundation is to promote psychodermatological research.

Biennially, the Foundation presents the Herman Musaph Award to a scientist who has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of psychodermatology. A presentation ceremony is held during each International Congress on Dermatology and Psychiatry, organized by the European Society for Dermatology and Psychiatry.

The Herman Musaph Award is a Medal of Honour, made by a renowned Dutch artist, Geer Steyn. The first Award was presented to Uwe Gieler (1999), the second to Caroline Koblenzer (2001). The third Award will be presented during the 10th International Congress on Dermatology and Psychiatry, to be held in Brussels, May 8–10, 2003.

### Herman Musaph

Herman Musaph was born in Amsterdam in 1915, the eldest son of orthodox Jewish parents. He studied medicine at the University of Amsterdam, and he started to work as a general practitioner in 1940. He was the only member of his family to survive the Nazi holocaust, and he remained eternally grateful to a Dutch family who took him in and protected him during the war years.

Following the war, he specialized in psychiatry and psychoanalysis, and he became a distinguished scientist in the fields of psychodermatology, sexology, and psychotraumatology. He made valuable contributions to the understanding of the long-term psychosocial implications of World War II, elucidating how that tragedy of repression and terror affected daily life in contemporary society. In 1977, he was appointed

Professor in Medical Sexology at the University of Utrecht. In that year he published a *Handbook of Sexology*, subsequently translated in many languages. A basic theme in all his work was the development and protection of the harmonious emotional life.

From 1953, Herman Musaph was consulting psychiatrist in the Department of Dermatology of the University of Amsterdam, and later became Head of the Department of Psychodermatology. Musaph's psychoanalytic background enabled him to develop a thorough understanding of emotional factors in skin diseases. He wrote publications on the role of aggression in self-induced conditions, such as dermatitis artefacta, on emotional conflicts in psychogenic pruritis, and on defence mechanisms in psoriasis. He was particularly interested in itching states and scratching behaviour. In 1964, an important and comprehensive study on *Itching and Scratching, Psychodynamics in Dermatology* was published.

Whereas others used the terms 'psychosomatic dermatology' or 'psychocutaneous medicine', Musaph used the word 'psychodermatology'. In a brilliant study on its history (1974) he described psychodermatology as the study of psychological variables related to the onset, course and treatment of skin diseases. Although he primarily studied psychopathological aspects of skin disease, he always emphasized the psychological meaning of the skin in normal personal development, especially the meaning of skin contact, touching, and intimate behaviour. He pointed out that, in many ways, skin contact between mother and child is essential for a healthy emotional life.

Herman Musaph, Nestor of Psychodermatology, enjoyed the renewed interest in psychodermatology, which started in the late 1980s. In 1987, the first International Congress on Dermatology and Psychiatry was held in Vienna. In many countries, including the Netherlands, societies for psychodermatological research were founded. Moreover, initiatives were taken to establish a European Society for Dermatology and Psychia-

try, and an Association for Psychocutaneous Medicine of North America. Until the very last moment, Herman Musaph was committed to and actively involved in psychodermatology. He fell ill during a meeting of the European Society in Paris, and died only a few weeks later, at the age of 77.

### Uwe Gieler

The first Herman Musaph Award was presented to Uwe Gieler in Paris in 1999. Gieler became active in the field of psychodermatology in the 1980s, and wrote his first publications on emotional factors and body image. He published on many skin diseases, such as acne and psoriasis, as well as pruritus, artefacts and delusions. However, he became renowned and respected for his outstanding studies on atopic dermatitis. Gieler was trained as a dermatologist and a psychotherapist. He has thus been able to integrate his dermatological and psychotherapeutic expertise. In Germany, his home-country, he made an outstanding contribution to the national working group on psychosomatic dermatology. He is one of the founders of the Arbeitskreis Psychosomatische Dermatologie and the European Society for Dermatology and Psychiatry.

In 1995, Gieler became Professor in Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy at the Medical Centre for Psychosomatic Medicine of the University of Giessen, Germany. He established the International Journal on Dermatology and Psychosomatics, and he is currently managing several important research projects.

The Herman Musaph Award was given to Uwe Gieler for his outstanding contributions to research, organization and education in psychodermatology.

### Caroline Koblenzer

The second Herman Musaph Award was presented to Caroline Koblenzer in Barcelona in 2001. Koblenzer was born in England, and graduated in medicine from the University of London in 1953. She became a resident in dermatology in 1964. Around that time she was given a book to review which, combined with her profound interest in psychoanalysis, initiated her long career in psychodermatology. The book was Herman Musaph's famous study on 'Itching and Scratching'. Ever

since, Koblenzer has dedicated herself to the integration of dermatology and psychoanalysis.

The impressive list of publications of Koblenzer includes studies on the dysmorphic syndrome, delusions of parasitosis, psychogenic purpura, dermatitis artefacta, atopic eczema, itching, tanning, and aging skin. The list also contains a famous, even classic, textbook on *Psychocutaneous Disease*.

Together with her loyal, supportive husband, Caroline Koblenzer has made innumerable contributions to the International Congresses on Dermatology and Psychiatry. She was President of the 4th Congress in Philadelphia, and she is also the Founder and Former President of the Association for Psychocutaneous Medicine of North America. In many ways she has played, and is still playing, an important role in uniting colleagues from the Old World and the New World. The Herman Musaph Award was given to her for her lifelong devotion and achievements in psychodermatology.

### Recommended Reading

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