

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Pioneers in Dermatology and Venereology: an interview with Professor Eva-Bettina Bröcker

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Conflicts of interest

None declared.

Funding source

None declared.



Curriculum Vitae

Eva Bröcker was born in 1946, in Bielefeld, Germany.

1965–1971	Medical School, University of Kiel (Germany) and University of Leeds (UK)
1972	Promotion to Dr. med.
1973	Licence as Physician
1973–1975	Stipend of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft DFG) in Kiel/Germany and Basel/Switzerland

1975–1982	Residency in Dermatology at the University Münster (Prof. Egon Macher)
1982	Board Recognition for Dermatology and Venereology
1984	PhD Thesis (Habilitation) in Dermatology and Venereology
1986	Professor (C2) at the University of Münster
1986	Specialist in 'Allergology'
1991	Chair and Director of the Department of Dermatology and Venereology at the University in Würzburg (until 2011)
1996	Specialist in 'Environmental Medicine'
1996	Specialist in 'Phlebology'
2004	Specialist in 'Dermato-Histology'
2004–2010	Speaker of the Clinical Research Group 'Tumor microenvironment' of the DFG

Membership in Scientific Societies and Committees

1995–2004	Bayerische Forschungsstiftung (Bavarian Research Foundation)
1995–2004	Scientific Technological Advisory Board of the Bavarian Government
1998–2005	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
1998–2011	Interdisciplinary Centre for Clinical Research University Würzburg
2006–2006	German Dermatological Society (DDG)
2001–2005	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
2008	Committee of Medicine of the Scientific Advisory Board of the German Government
2011	University Advisory Board Schleswig-Holstein

Awards

1989	Johannes Fabry Medal
1997	Federal Cross of Merit, Germany
2000	'Pro Meritis Scientiae et Litterarum' Award of the Bavarian Ministry for Science, Research and Arts
2001	Election to the Bavarian Academy of Science

2001	Bavarian Maximilian Order for Science and Arts
2002	Election to the German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina
2006	Braun-Falco Medal
2012	Constitutional Medal

What brought you to dermatology?

I had a postdoc research position at the Department of Immunology in the University of Kiel and worked on cellular cytotoxicity in mouse models. Because of a very sensitive T-cell cytotoxicity test I brought to perfection, I was invited for some months to the Basel Institute for Immunology by Harald von Boehmer in order to test his bone marrow chimera. During my stay in Basel, after giving a talk at an immunology meeting in Basel, in 1975, Egon Macher and Clemens Sorg 'caught' me to join their group at the Department of Dermatology of the University of Münster (Germany), having had learned of the move of my family from Kiel to Münster where my husband had got a professorship in mathematics.

Who were your most important teachers? From whom did you learn most?

My most important teachers were Egon Macher and Fereydoun Vakilzadeh at the Department of Dermatology of University of Münster, and also Gert Riethmüller, at that time immunologist in Tübingen. Egon Macher was a brilliant dermatologist and immunologist, and a wonderful human. He stimulated laboratory research without pressing us into topics he himself was highly interested in. For Egon Macher, only the quality of scientific projects and publications was important. He provided the most important education for my later dermatological life with the challenge being the director of a big university hospital. My great interest in dermatopathology started in 1978 (after my third child was born) by working daily with Fereydoun Vakilzadeh at a double-headed microscope and was further stimulated by cooperation with pathologists in Germany (Hans-Konrad Müller-Hermelink, Walter F. Lever and his wife Gundula Schaumburg), the Netherlands (Dirk Ruiter) and the United States (Bernhard Ackerman).

Please list five of your best publications

Bröcker EB, Kuhlencordt KM, Müller-Ruchholtz W. Microcytotoxicity test in allograft immunity: specificity and kinetics of effector T cells. *Int Arch Allergy Appl Immunol.* 1977; 53(3):234-41.

Bröcker EB, Suter L, Sorg C. HLA-DR antigen expression in primary melanomas of the skin. *J Invest Dermatol.* 1984 Mar; 82(3):244-7.

Bröcker EB, Suter L, Brügggen J, Ruiter DJ, Macher E, Sorg C. Phenotypic dynamics of tumor progression in human malignant melanoma. *Int J Cancer.* 1985 Jul 15; 36(1):29-35

Ruiter DJ, Bröcker EB. Immunohistochemistry in the evaluation of melanocytic tumors. *Semin Diagn Pathol.* 1993 Feb; 10(1):76-91. (Review)

Curtin JA, Fridlyand J, Kageshita T, Patel HN, Busam KJ, Kutzner H, Cho KH, Aiba S, Bröcker EB, LeBoit PE, Pinkel D,

Bastian BC. Distinct sets of genetic alterations in melanoma. *N Engl J Med.* 2005 Nov 17; 353(20):2135-47.

Have you ever been in the leadership of an academic society?

Yes, in the EORTC, in the board of the melanoma research group, also as associated board member of the board of the DDG when I was editor of the *Hautarzt* and *JDDG*. I worked for decades as a member of the board of research organization, such as the DFG, science council and supervisory board of the three Universities in Schleswig-Holstein. After being retired in 2011, I chaired the Ethical Committee of the Würzburg University and was elected as chairperson of the Siebold-Collegium, Institute for Advanced Studies (SCIAS) of the university.

What was your greatest achievement in your professional life?

Getting the chairmanship of the Department of Dermatology, University of Würzburg (1992).

What was the greatest disappointment in your professional life?

The committee for a dermatology chair in Marburg decided to kick off the single woman (me) from their list; because of political reasons ('Frauenförderung' in Hessen), they feared that the Ministry of Science might put the female applicant from the last to the first place of the list (around 1989/1990).

Can you tell us any funny episodes from your professional life?

To experience the faculty of medicine during my first years in Würzburg where there was only one woman (me) sitting in the faculty meetings. Another experience was the creation of 'scientific peace' by cooperation I forced between my group and a controversially publishing other group. The 'struggle' had been on the prognostic importance of class I and class II histocompatibility antigen expression on human melanomas. I just invited the 'enemies' for a week of common laboratory work. The result was peace forever and a good common publication.

Apart from dermatology, what is your major interest?

Our family, consisting of our 3 daughters, which in the mean time grew with the addition of their three husbands and five grandchildren (two of whom already became medical students). I share with my husband the love of sailing in the Baltic sea, painting and writing (poems and stories). All the family likes to produce cabaret, and even little operas. The main singers in our big family are as follows: one son-in-law (baritone) and myself (mezzosoprano). My further more professional hobby is the dermatology in fine arts. I hope to publish some of my 'diagnoses in the museum' in the near future.

Who is your favourite composer, writer, painter?

Franz Schubert, Erich Kästner, Rembrandt van Rijn.

Who would you list as the most influential dermatologists in history?

Egon Macher, Fereydoun Vakilzadeh, Otto Braun-Falco, Stephen Katz (USA), Arthur James Rook, Darrell Wilkinson (UK) and others.

Who would you list among the top ten living dermatologists?

Peter Fritsch, Thomas Schwarz, Henning Hamm, Leena Bruckner-Tuderman, Matthias Goebeler, Johannes Ring, Rudolf Happle and others.

What will be the greatest problem for dermatology in the next ten years?

The actual decreased interest in basic research of young dermatologists. I hope that more and more young dermatologists will perform basic research in future.

What will be the next breakthrough in the coming ten years in dermatology?

I think infectious diseases will regain great importance in medicine, also in dermatology. The same, to my opinion, holds true for epigenetics.

*Note: The Pioneers in Dermatology and Venereology interview was conceived and conducted by Johannes Ring.