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Written by Dr. Anne Gill, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Emory University Hospital

Dr. Josef Rosch

Dr. Josef Rosch recently passed away in January 2016 after having one of the most impressive and innovative careers in interventional radiology since the specialty emerged in the early 1960s. His self-coined phrase “odyssey in interventional radiology” began shortly after he completed his medical degree in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia in 1950. Although he was initially trained as an internist, he followed his interests in portal hypertension and performed the first documented percutaneous splenoportogram in 1954. He published his findings and procedural technique which caught the attention of Dr. Charles Dotter. Dr. Dotter and Rosch soon became pen pals and eventually the two met when Dotter delivered his keynote address at the 1963 Czechoslovak Radiological congress. In his address, Dotter challenged the participants that they begin to think of angiography as a therapeutic procedure and not only as a diagnostic tool.

Dr. Dotter invited Rosch to pursue his interests and training in angiography as his fellow in 1965 in Portland, Oregon. The move to the United States proved to be difficult for Dr. Rosch due to the political unrest between the Czech government and the Soviet Union. He was only able to bring his daughter with him at first, and then his wife and son joined them two years later. Dr. Rosch pursued another year of training at UCLA and, shortly thereafter, he joined the faculty at Oregon Health and Science University where he continued to work until 2 days before his death.

During his career in Portland, Dr. Rosch published hundreds of scientific articles on his work, as well as numerous book chapters, educational videos, and textbooks. Two iconic procedures credited to him include transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt (TIPS) creation (1969) and selective arterial embolization for acute gastrointestinal bleeding (1972). He also significantly contributed to coronary angiography, transjugular liver biopsy techniques, selective thrombolysis, fallopian tube recanalization, and the development of self-expandable stents. In addition to his robust clinical and research career, he organized and participated in American and European radiological society meetings and was recognized with many awards and honors.

Arguably one of his greatest achievements was the creation and leadership of the Dotter Interventional Institute, where he was the Institute director for 24 years. In this role, he collaborated with industry leaders, trained upcoming physicians, and developed new procedural techniques and medical devices. At the age of 90 years old, he wrote an autobiography further detailing his contributions and recollections from his career. From his humble beginnings in Czechoslovakia to becoming a world famous interventional radiologist, Dr. Rosch always maintained a kind demeanor and a passion for improving patient care.