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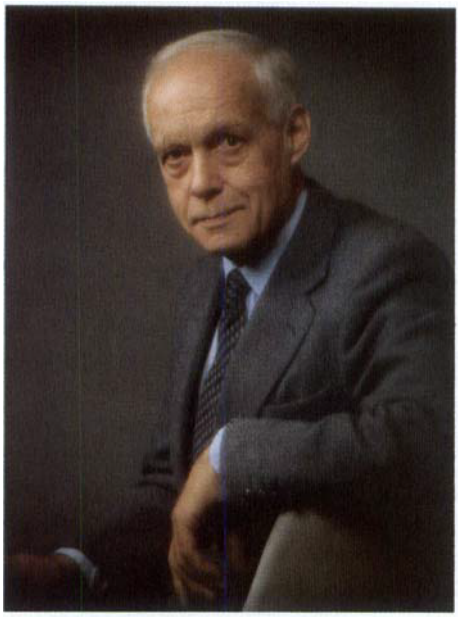
Anders Hulth 70 years



Anders Hulth was raised and educated in an academic environment in Uppsala, Sweden, where his father was head of the university library. After graduating from medical school, Anders Hulth took his specialist training in surgery and subsequently became a "Vollchirurg", the typical product of the Uppsala Department of Surgery at that time. This type of surgeon had little need for subspecialities, and definitely not for orthopedics: his teachers were Gunnar Nyström in Uppsala and Sven Johansson in Gothenburg – both pioneers in fracture surgery, notably the treatment of fractures of the femoral neck. In his training, clinical work and research Anders Hulth was associated with professors such as Robin Fåhraeus in pathology and contemporaries including Bengt Engfeldt, Gunnar Nylander, Sven Olerud and Olle Westerborn – all who were to become prominent in Swedish surgery and medical research.

Anders Hulth began his scientific career fairly late in life – his medical science doctorate thesis was presented in 1956. It described a series of intravenous phlebographies in patients with cervical hip fracture and was the first successful attempt to reproduce Astley Cooper's cadaver injection technique in patients. Although his method had certain drawbacks, Hulth provided a morphologic basis for kinetic isotope studies simultaneously introduced by Tucker for predicting the prognosis in cervical hip fracture. The investigators in the 1950's of this fracture were forerunners of measurements of intraosseous pressure, uptake and disappearance of radioactive and other tracers, as well as other methods that became available with technologic progress.

Over the years, Anders Hulth has returned to the vascularity of the femoral head in several studies, in which he has employed a number of different techniques. However, he has also explored a totally different field: namely, the effect of various enzymes on the growth of cartilage and bone. In his studies of the effects of radiation, cortical steroids, and a variety of other agents on the physis cartilage, he was the first to use tetracycline labels.

Table 1. Orthopedic Department in Malmö (1941–1964 chairman Sophus von Rosen, 1964–1981 chairman Anders Hulth).

	1941	1964	1981
Number of beds	46	156	130
Patients admitted	358	1.779	3.347
Operations on patients admitted	153	1.323	3.917
Wards	1	5	5
Clinic Visits	?	37.500	65.000
Operations in ambulatory patients	201	1.197	1.602
Staff Surgeons	2	9	21
Registered Nurses	3	22	40
Physical Therapists	0	7	13
Secretaries	0	7	30
Total number of employees	?	150	229

With this interest in the physiology of the locomotor system, it is not surprising that Anders Hulth in the late fifties was recruited by Carl Hirsch, at that time head of orthopedics in Uppsala. After additional training in Uppsala and a two-year sojourn in Gothenburg, Anders Hulth was appointed head of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Malmö General Hospital in 1965 which three years later was combined with a professorship at Lund University.

During his sixteen years as chairman in Malmö, the demand for orthopedic care increased tremendously (Table 1) as the new arthroplasties were introduced and the number of fractures doubled in the aging population. Anders Hulth subspecialized his expanding department to deliver the care demanded by the public without stifling the capacity for research. By design, as well as by necessity, the research was focused on clinical problems, but a sector of orthopedically oriented basic research was maintained and strengthened. As a measure of his success, almost thirty M. D. science theses were presented during his period of office, and hundreds of papers were published in international journals.

Beside his administrative duties, Anders Hulth maintained his surgical practice and continued his own research. An important contribution was his experimental model for producing arthrosis in rabbits, which has been adopted by many investigators. With this model and a variety of histomorphologic and chemical techniques, Anders Hulth and his coworkers were able to study the earliest changes in degenerative cartilage.

The latest issue to which Anders Hulth has addressed himself is that of immunology and the importance of immunologic mechanisms for fracture healing and other cell differentiation events, including signs of immunologic response in arthrosis. This chapter in the career of Anders Hulth just seems to have begun.

When the ideologies of the early sixties somewhat abruptly found their way into Swedish health politics, the outcome in some instances was so extraordinary that many felt that something had to be done. Now, Anders Hulth took a stand not only for orthopedics but, on the whole, for the rights of the elderly to obtain treatment of life-threatening or severely incapacitating conditions in competition with a fairly healthy segment of the population who were consuming preventive primary care of questionable worth. For some years deeply involved in the public debate, Anders Hulth showed high courage and was to become respected also by those who were not always sympathetic to his opinions.

It would be easy to become envious of Anders Hulth, a man who went to medical school in the thirties, early enough to enjoy some of the legendary teachers; a dedicated physician who has had a distinguished career in both general and orthopedic surgery; a scientist who has managed to become deeply involved in at least four fields of medical research; a teacher and scholar who has had a distinguished academic career crowned with a highly successful mandate as professor and chairman of an orthopedic department; and a senior citizen and gentleman who after retirement is still active and successful in his research, and continues to play and enjoy the piano. It could not have happened to a nicer fellow!

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