

Prof. Dr. Marcell U. Heim, Chairman of the ARGE Board Retires

BY ALEXA WETZEL, PPTA ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, SOURCE EUROPE

Prof. Dr. Marcell U. Heim, Head of the Institute of Transfusion Medicine and Immunohematology and Professor at the Medical Faculty of the Otto-von-Guericke-University in Magdeburg (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany), retired in late 2016. The institute, which provides the University Hospital with sufficient blood and plasma, was directed by Heim for the past 22 years.



Prof. Heim was born in Frankfurt (Hesse, Germany), went to secondary school in Austria, and finished his university studies and Ph.D. in Munich. His career started in Munich and in 1993—a couple of years after the German reunification—he was offered the opportunity to move to Magdeburg, in the Eastern part of Germany, and to manage the Institute of Transfusion Medicine and Immunohematology at the University Hospital. His role was to ensure a sufficient supply of blood and blood components, including plasma and plasma protein therapies.

However, Heim has become famous in Germany for a different kind of donation. He is the initiator of a regional bone marrow donation registry. In 1995, when the parents of a local leukemia patient were looking for a suitable donor, he succeeded in motivating 21,000 people from the region of Saxony-Anhalt to undergo a blood test and created the first registry. Today this registry contains more than 33,000 names and the Association for Bone Marrow Donation in Saxony-Anhalt has succeeded in helping patients from around the world.

His expertise, engagement, and friendly nature also contributed in increasing the number of committed blood and plasma donors for the Institute.

Heim also has many other passions, one of which is cooking. He always jokes that if he hadn't become a physician he would have been a well-known chef. He owns more than 1,000 cookbooks and has even written a couple.

His other trademark is his Citroën 2CV ("Duck"). The Duck was the first car he owned and since then has never wanted to have any other car. He still proudly drives his Duck even if it is very cold in the winter.

He is and has always been very engaged with different associations. For the past ten years, he was also the chairman of the board of the German Arbeitsgemeinschaft Plasmapherese (ARGE) e.V. (German Working Group on Plasmaphereses).

The ARGE was founded in 1997. The unique aspect of the ARGE is that it brings together the four different parties that are involved in plasma collection in Germany: the German Red Cross organizations; state owned and community hospitals; independent collectors; and the industry.

The mission of the ARGE is to foster sufficient plasma collection for the manufacturing of high-quality plasma protein therapies but also to ensure donor and product safety. The ARGE has, on many occasions, provided scientific support for plasmapheresis. Its contributions to the Guidelines of

the German Physician Chamber and the support of the SIPLA (Safety of long-term intensive plasmapheresis in donors) studies are some examples.

In 2015, more than 2.2 million liters of plasma were collected by ARGE members. This included source plasma, recovered plasma, and plasma for therapeutic purposes.

One strength of the ARGE has always been the organization of its annual Congress in late November. This Congress is one of the only continuing medical education opportunities in the German-speaking area that is geared exclusively to staff from plasma collection organizations.

Last year's Congress, which took place in Magdeburg, Germany was Professor Heim's farewell.

Now that he is retired, he has plenty of new projects. One is to write a book on the year after the German reunification. His purpose is to illustrate all the exciting things that happened 25 years ago, in the Eastern part of Germany. His fascination with East Germany is related to his grandparents, as they used to live in Brandenburg where he visited them regularly until 1965, when the Berlin Wall was erected.

PPTA and ARGE have worked together on many projects throughout the past 15 years.

PPTA would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Heim for the outstanding collaboration and contributions to the industry. ●



An example of a Citroën 2CV ("Duck").

His other trademark is his Citroën 2CV ("Duck"). The Duck was the first car he owned and since then has never wanted to have any other car.