

Milestones of Medical History in Heidelberg

The Thoraxklinik Heidelberg has its origins in the so-called 'Rohrbach Castle'.

Carl August of Palatinate-Zweibrücken, heir to the throne and an avid hunter, erected the rural castle at Rohrbach in 1772, from where he could take part in the festive hunts staged by the Electoral Palatinate Court. After his death in 1795 his younger brother, Max Joseph, became Duke of Palatinate-Zweibrücken. Upon his accession to the throne as the first king of Bavaria, Max Joseph made a present of the estate to his mother-in-law, Amalie Margravine of Baden, who is recorded in history as the 'mother-in-law of Europe' due to the excellent marriages made by her daughters.



In June 1815, after Napoleon's downfall, she dined at Rohrbach Castle with Europe's most powerful rulers. Her guests on this memorable evening included no less than her son-in-law, Czar Alexander I of Russia, and Emperor Franz I of Austria.

In 1898 the 'Convalescent Care Association' purchased the small castle together with the park grounds. Thus the former hunting lodge was transformed into the Rohrbacher Schlösschen convalescent home, the first of its kind in Baden. With the outbreak of the First World War the castle, along with its new annex, became a military hospital.

After the end of the war the former convalescent home served as a tuberculosis hospital for disabled veterans and surviving dependants, and was managed by the Public Welfare Office in Karlsruhe. Due to the fact that this hospital was increasingly used by insurers, also for special therapies, to meet the needs of a growing number of persons insured by the former LVA (State Insurance Office) Baden, the clinic was taken over by LVA Baden in the year 1929.



One year before the tuberculosis hospital was taken over by LVA Baden, Prof. Dr. Albert Fraenkel (1928-1933) became the medical director. In the same year he was offered a chair as honorary professor at the University of Heidelberg. Albert Fraenkel made medical history in the treatment of cardiac insufficiency by being the first to administer strophanthin intravenously. Fraenkel's successor was Dr. Walter Schmidt (1933-1938), an assistant professor. The name Walter Schmidt is closely associated with the development of the so-called pulmonary collapse therapy. Before the introduction of medical treatment for lung tuberculosis, the therapy pursued at that time for the epidemic disease consisted of immobilizing the lung and reducing the focus of infection.

Walter Schmidt's school in Rohrbach was continued by his successors Prof. Dr. Ludwig Adelberger (1939-1946), Dr. Ludwig Theis (1946-1947) and Prof. Dr. Dr. Gaubatz (1947-1972). Prof. Dr. Ingolf Vogt-Moykopf, whose period of office lasted from 1972 to 1996, succeeded Prof. Dr. Dr. Gaubatz as medical director. Prof. Dr. Vogt-Moykopf developed and perfected surgical techniques in the treatment of lung cancer. To spare patients a pneumonectomy (removal of a lung), which is accompanied by a significant loss of life quality, Prof. Dr. Vogt-Moykopf introduced organ-saving resection methods such as the so-called sleeve resection on the bronchus and pulmonary vascular tree as well as lobar lung transplantations. Another main focus of Prof. Dr. Vogt-Moykopf's work included the surgery of metastases of other primary tumors in the lung and chest as well as surgery of the particularly malignant pleural mesothelioma (asbestos cancer).

Succeeding Prof. Dr. Vogt-Moykopf, Prof. Dr. Peter Drings, medical director from 1996 to 2005, continued to promote the development of the clinic into an internationally recognized center of diagnosis and therapy for diseases of the thoracic organs. An essential prerequisite for success proved to be the spirit of cooperation prevailing within the different clinical wards and functional areas, beyond that with external partners, especially with the Tumor Center Heidelberg-Mannheim and the University Hospital of Heidelberg as well as with clinics and research institutions both domestic and abroad.

Prof. Dr. Hendrik Dienemann succeeded Prof. Dr. Vogt-Moykopf in the function of senior consultant of the thoracic surgery in 1996 and also became medical director of the clinic in 2005. In his position as senior consultant of the thoracic surgery Prof. Dr. Dienemann oversaw the expansion of the department with ca 2,300 operations per year into the largest specialist department for thoracic surgery in Germany.



In the course of the last 25 years the Thoraxklinik Heidelberg, which has a 310-bed capacity, has developed from a former specialist clinic for tuberculosis into a hospital of supraregional significance that provides maximum medical care. Patients receive treatment in the clinic for diseases of the lung, the mediastinum, the pleura, the thoracic wall and surrounding areas. It is one of the partners of the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) and works closely with the University Hospital of Heidelberg as well as the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), thus guaranteeing a modern diagnosis and therapy for those affected with malignant lung diseases, who account for approximately half of the patients.

Since 1999 the Thoraxklinik Heidelberg maintains the legal status of a non-profit organization with limited liability. All wards that are needed for the provision of maximum care have been created at the Thoraxklinik. Furthermore, the clinic has specialized functional laboratories for biochemical, immunological, cardio-respiratory and pathological-anatomical diagnosis.

In addition to their work in research and teaching, Senior Consultants Prof. Dr. Dienemann of the Surgical Department and Prof. Dr. Thomas of Internal Medicine ? Oncology hold a C4 professorship, which promotes scientific exchange and intensifies clinical collaboration, at the University of Heidelberg. The department of pneumology and respiratory medicine is administered by Assistant Medical Director Prof. Dr. Herth, who is also very involved in research and teaching, especially in cooperation with the Medical Univ. Clinic III in Heidelberg.

One focus of clinical research in the past few years has been on the further development of interdisciplinary treatment of lung carcinomas, surgical treatment of lung metastases, development of new methods in endoscopy and brachytherapy as well as improvement in anti-neoplastic chemotherapy. Apart from these major focal points, there is an increase of study in the area of chronic obstructive respiratory diseases, in particular in the treatment of emphysema.

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Moreover, the newly founded NCT (National Center for Tumor Diseases) in Heidelberg in 2004 offers the opportunity to combine clinical-oncological as well as scientific activities. The NCT is a model institution, supported by the German Cancer Research Center, the University Clinic of Heidelberg, the Thoraxklinik Heidelberg as well as the German Cancer Society. As a consequence, the weekly operations conference at the Thoraxklinik was broadened into a Tumor Board, into which the radiotherapy clinic of the university as well as the departments of the Thoraxklinik are integrated.

As a leading lung specialist clinic in Germany and designated center of excellence, the Thoraxklinik is well aware of its obligation to maintain a high standard of quality. In line with this concept, the Clinic received KTQ certification (Cooperation for Transparency and Quality in Health Care) as well as certification as a lung cancer center of the NCT Heidelberg at the beginning of the year 2009.