

In Memoriam Dr. Mildred Scheel



The Wilsede Meeting is also supported by the Wilsede Fellowship Programme of the Dr. Mildred Scheel Stiftung, which is part of the Deutsche Krebshilfe. Since that Foundation was established by Dr. Mildred Scheel, it is appropriate that we should reflect and comment on the great contribution which she made to cancer prevention, treatment and research. This meeting is the first Wilsede meeting since her untimely death on 13 May last year. She succumbed to cancer – the disease to whose conquest she had devoted the whole of her professional life.

Who was Mildred Scheel? What were her ideas and what did she achieve with her Foundation?

Mildred Scheel was born in Cologne in 1932, daughter of a physician and radiologist. She studied medicine and specialized in radiology. Later, she married Mr. Walter Scheel before he was appointed Minister for Foreign Af-

fairs. When Mr. Scheel subsequently became President of the Federal Republic of Germany, she became the "First Lady" of this country. No doubt this helped her to fulfil her noble ambition to contribute to the fight against cancer. As a consequence of this, she founded the Deutsche Krebshilfe in 1974. From that time on, all her efforts were directed towards encouraging people to contribute money for this crucial purpose. During the first 10 years of the Deutsche Krebshilfe, she was able to collect more than 230 million Deutschmarks. She developed many significant ideas for organizing cancer prevention, early diagnosis and treatment that was applicable on a large scale. She initiated the establishment of the first five cancer centres in this country. Once they were functioning successfully, she was able to convince the Government to assume full responsibility for maintaining them. She then prepared to launch new undertakings. It became apparent to people that she had unique qualities that enabled her to initiate new ideas for fighting cancer, and this added significantly to her personal success. She also supported in particular the treatment of childhood cancer in many hospitals, and initiated the psychosocial after-care of patients and their families. In addition, she aided individuals who were economically affected by having cancer.

The Dr. Mildred Scheel Stiftung was established to promote and support cancer research. It supports a great number of research projects in many institutes and provides a fellowship programme for scientists to work and study at institutions abroad. Included in that programme is the Wilsede Fellowship Programme. Dr. Mildred Scheel Stiftung is now an important body in the Federal Republic of Germany for the granting of fellowships. Many of Mildred Scheel's initiatives were not broadly accepted at first, but through her continued energy they are now accepted as common practices in the oncological field in this country.

When she had a particular goal in sight, no obstacles could prevent her from reaching it. Yet, for all her tenacity, Mildred Scheel was a warm, loving and sensitive person who had special understanding for cancer patients, together with a human touch. She was always very hard-working and enthusiastic, and stimulating for all of us. None of those who, like myself, had worked with her in the Foundation for over 10 years can remember her ever missing a meeting of the board or the scientific councils of the Deutsche Krebshilfe or the Dr. Mildred Scheel Stiftung, until the last few weeks of her life. During those meetings she listened carefully to the experts, although sometimes she came to her own conclusions when she was convinced that a particular step forward had to be made. She never lost her enthusiasm for helping others, even when she realized what would be the consequence of her own illness. She always seemed to be positive in her attitude and could always stimulate others with her spirit and her personality. She could have done so much more in the future and she is sadly missed by all of us today. We all will always remember her with great devotion.

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