

## In Memoriam Steffen Bülow

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It is with regret that we announce the passing of one of the most prominent figures in Danish colorectal surgery – Professor Steffen Bülow. Professor Bülow graduated from the University of Copenhagen in 1969 and after training at Copenhagen hospitals, including Rigshospitalet, Bispebjerg Hospital, and Hvidovre Hospital, he became a specialist in Surgery and Surgical Gastroenterology in 1981 and 1982, respectively. His final position was as chief physician at Hvidovre Hospital in 1990, where he established a department that was very significant in terms of research and development during his tenure.

While working at Bispebjerg Hospital, he became interested in hereditary colorectal cancer, which became his greatest passion. In 1976, he became the head of the Danish Polyposis Registry, establishing the world's first national registry for Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP). This led him to defending his PhD in 1986 on FAP. He went on to co-found the Leeds Castle Polyposis Group and the International Society for Gastrointestinal Hereditary Tumors. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, he was awarded a lifetime honorary membership.

FAP was not the only area of his interest. As chairman of the Danish Colorectal Cancer Group from 2003 to 2010, he was a professional adviser to the Danish Health Authority, co-founder of the HNPCC (hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer) register, and was deeply involved in developing colorectal cancer package courses. He is among those few who introduced pouch surgery and one of the most significant surgical advances in the treatment of rectal cancer in Denmark, namely total mesorectal resection. Alongside all this, he ran a part-time practice in Holte.

After the fall of the wall, he received a young Lithuanian surgeon for training at Hvidovre Hospital and as a result, a lifelong friendship was formed. After his first visit in 1994, Steffen Bülow made a number of visits to Lithuania, lectured on various topics related to colon and rectal surgery, performed surgeries on Lithuanian patients, introduced both TME and pouch surgery to the newly reborn European country, and was the key figure in establishing a Lithuanian FAP registry. As a result of this lasting connection, more than 40 Lithuanian surgeons participated in an observer program at Hvidovre Hospital for several weeks.

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Throughout his career, Steffen Bülow has published numerous articles on FAP, hereditary gastrointestinal tumors, colorectal cancer, and pouch surgery for FAP and ulcerative colitis.

In his work, he always focused on clinically relevant issues, since the improvement of patient care was his major objective. Focus should be placed on the patient. The only thing that could provoke his temper was administrative bureaucracy that put obstacles in the way of development and good patient care. He was well liked by the patients and trusted by them, and to this day, 12 years after his retirement, many of them still ask of him.

The late Professor Steffen Bülow was a great inspiration for young surgeons and an example of diligence. Even prior to his death, he enjoyed reviewing draft articles, and you could be certain that there were corrections – and not just linguistic ones. Those of us who have worked with him know that clinical development and research are always backed and supported by him.

In November 2022, he received an award for his life time achievements in colon and rectal surgery from the International Society of University Colon and Rectal Surgeons.

Many of those who had the privilege to know this outstanding colon and rectal surgeon, as well as an amazing unforgettable human being, will deeply miss him.

*Niels Jespersen, John Karstensen and Helle Højen*