

Obituary

Vincent Barras, Hubert Steinke

Marcel H. Bickel (14.10.1927–1.8.2017)

Marcel Bickel, editor-in-chief of *Gesnerus* 1993–2001, died on 1st of August 2017.

After his studies of chemistry and biochemistry at the University of Basel he stayed for several years at the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome and the NIH in Bethesda. Back in Switzerland, now at the University of Bern, he was appointed lecturer (*Privatdozent*) in 1967, full professor in 1971 and head of the Institute of Pharmacology in 1977. His research focused on drug metabolism and pharmacokinetics, psychopharmacology and toxicology.

Already as a young scientist – and not least thanks to his uncle Henry E. Sigerist – Bickel developed a keen interest in the historical perspective on medicine in general and on pharmacology in particular. From the 1960s onwards and especially after his retirement in 1993 he published a number of historical works, most notably books on the biochemist Marcel Nencki (1972), the history of experimental pharmacology (2000), the historiography of medicine (2007) and – very recently – early women physicians (2017). Within the community of medical historians he is presumably best known as editor of some 3000 letters of Sigerist, an invaluable source for 20th century history of medicine.

Marcel Bickel was a key actor in the development and professionalization of the history of medicine in Switzerland. It is largely thanks to his commitment that a proper chair and institute of the history of medicine was installed at the University of Bern in the 1970s. As president of the Swiss Society for the History of Medicine and Sciences (1987–1989) and especially as editor-in-chief of *Gesnerus* 1993–2001 he guaranteed stability in the continuing transformation of our academic profession. We will remember Marcel Bickel not only as an important member of our community but also as warm-hearted friend and colleague whose constructive criticism and encouragement inspired many of us.