

OBITUARY

Åke Möller (1916–2009)

Åke Möller, a man renowned for his contribution to endodontics, passed away on 2 December 2009 at the age of 93.

Åke Möller was born in 1916 in Bohuslän, near Göteborg, Sweden, and graduated as a dentist at the Stockholm Dental School in 1941. He was active as a general dentist in Göteborg from 1943 and early in his career was fascinated by microbiological problems in the clinic, especially those linked to treatment of root canals. He decided to attack these problems, and it eventually became his life's work. In 1951, with the support of Örjan Ouchterlony, the Professor of Microbiology, Möller began his microbiological career ultimately leading to his doctoral thesis published in Malmö, 1966.

Möller's thesis 'Microbiological Examination of Root Canals and Periapical Tissues of Human Teeth' is a landmark study within endodontics. In it, he laid the groundwork for performing bacteriological sampling from root canals and periapical tissues, using careful methods to avoid contamination or inhibition by medicaments applied during treatment. Almost half a century on, this seminal work is still the definitive manual for studies seeking to take reliable samples of the bacterial flora from root canals.

In 1967, a new Dental faculty was established in Göteborg, and Åke Möller became (the equivalent to) Associate Professor, and subsequently the first Professor of Oral Microbiology in 1972. He was active in this position until 1984, when he became Professor Emeritus. However, his interest in the subject kept him scientifically active and he continued to visit the department daily and published work within the field of endodontic microbiology as late as 2006, at the age of 90.

The work Möller initiated and performed with his collaborators, Lars Fabricius and Gunnar Dahlén, was another major contribution to endodontics and have become classic studies within the field. These studies showed the essential aetiological connection of anaerobic microorganisms to apical periodontitis and mapped the development of the microbial flora in necrotic root canals and the importance of bacterial relationships to the pattern of the disease process and

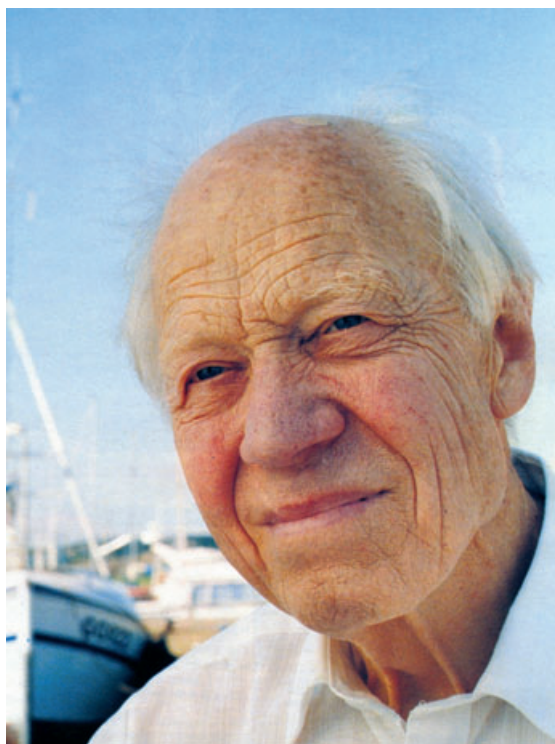


Photo credit: Johan Hedenström.

host response. It was a pleasure for him to finish his experimental work on root canal infections with a publication in 2006 showing the importance of post-treatment bacteria on inhibiting healing of apical periodontitis.

Away from his work, Åke Möller enjoyed the outdoor life and sailing. He lived all his life on the West Coast and loved sailing, which he had enjoyed since he was a child. Åke Möller was a genuine researcher driven by a scientific curiosity that developed from his clinical work. He was uncompromising with the truth, and always took the time and necessary resources to seek out the true facts. Åke Möller was an individual who made paramount contributions to endodontics, and we are all beneficiaries from his interest in it.

G. Sundqvist and D. Figdor