

In Memory of Albert Schinzel (1944 - 2025)

Albert Schinzel, a former president of the E.C.A., passed away in September 2025. Albert was the president from 2000 to 2006 and he oversaw three successful early E.C.A. conferences in Paris, Bologna and Madrid. Albert will be most remembered by E.C.A. members and students from all over the world for the annual Goldrain course which he founded two decades ago.



Albert Schinzel was a distinguished clinical geneticist and an expert in dysmorphology. He was a pioneer in the field of clinical cytogenetics and his name is associated with several genetic syndromes. Albert had a special talent for detecting associations between chromosomal errors and phenotype. This together with his vast knowledge and rigorous analysis resulted in his "Catalogue of Unbalanced Chromosome Aberrations in Man" (first published in 1983, updated in 2001 and reprinted in 2020); it remains a fundamental reference book.

He set up the Goldrain course in Clinical Cytogenetics in 2006. After his retirement in 2009 from the University of Zurich where he was the Director of the Institute of Medical Genetics, he fully devoted himself to this course, his passionate project. For two

decades the course has been a tremendous success. Students from all over the world hear about this course by word of mouth and there is often a waiting list for the following year. There are several reasons for its success. Albert carefully chose Goldrain Castle as the venue. It has a peaceful inspiring atmosphere with a view of mountains all around and the students and lecturers spend a lot of time together, also during meals. The castle is situated in the mountains in South Tyrol, Italy. The midweek half-day excursion has always been very relaxing and inspiring, especially under the guidance of Albert, who had extensive knowledge of the geography, history and culture of the area.

Albert had organized the course in such a way that lectures on laboratory methods and interpretation were closely linked to those on clinical diagnosis. A number of workshops on both clinical and laboratory topics were a part of the program. In this way both types of students, laboratory specialists and clinical geneticists, could get the real essence of 'clinical cytogenetics'. They could understand the nature and challenges of each other's work.

Professor Albert Schinzel was first and foremost a teacher and a mentor. He had the knack of involving the students in discussions, making individual and group photos and creating an atmosphere of togetherness; many students kept in touch with each other and with some teachers for years afterwards. Albert, who was always fully involved in the organization, teaching and guiding discussions, was very sorry that he was unable to be present at the 2025 course. A Goldrain course without Albert Schinzel is difficult to imagine. However, those of us who have been a part of the faculty, will continue the course in honour of Albert's legacy.

On the website of the Goldrain course you can find a personal note 'Remembering Albert' by Mariano Rocchi, the new director of the Goldrain course, who worked closely with Albert Schinzel in recent years, at <http://www.biologia.uniba.it/SEC/>