

In Memoriam

Ms. Tatjana Kniewald



Clinical embryologists, mourns the loss of their well-known, honored colleague Ms. Tatjana Kniewald who passed away in Nasice, Croatia, on May 4th, 2024, just before her 79th birthday.

Ms. Tatjana was a scientist par-excellence, a clinical embryologist who was responsible for the birth of many IVF babies - directly through her work as well as through the many embryologists she trained, an innovator and an entrepreneur; all at a time when iVF was itself a budding field.

It is almost impossible to try and describe all the achievements of Tatjana in a few sentences, but I will indeed make an attempt Tatjana who was really a brilliant scientist, embryologist – or as she used to present herself: reproductive biologist. As an IVF scientist, Tatjana was "the mother" of the first IVF baby – born in Germany in 1979 as well as to many thousands of babies born afterwards.

Tatjana Kniewald was born in Osijek, Croatia. She studied biology in Zagreb, and later in Vienna and Erlangen. From 1979 Tatjana started her work at the women's clinic in the University Hospital Erlangen as a reproductive biologist in the group of Prof. Trot now. Being a leading scientist, her intensive work resulted in the first IVF pregnancy in Germany (1981) followed by the birth of the first German IVF baby, Oliver, on April 16, 1982.

On 1981, during the period of the famous first IVF pregnancy in Germany, Tatjana, visited the group

of Alan Trounson in Melbourne, Australia, sharing with them her knowledge and experience of her journey via the magical pathways of the IVF-ART field.

On 1986, she left Erlangen and, together with her husband, Alfred Kniewald who himself is a talented biologist of human geneticist they established the first private IVF center in Germany in Würzburg, together with 2 clinicians.

Tatjana was also an innovator. In cooperation with a cryology engineer, she designed a machine for embryo freezing (slow freezing!) which was meant to bypass the seeding damage.

This was also the time when I visited their center to learn embryo freezing. Tatjana was an extraordinary and dedicated teacher. I learned a lot from her and not only freezing. Moreover, I spent with the Kniewalds, in their own home feeling as a part of the family, this was a "deal package" for most of their colleagues.

On 1987, the Kniewald couple opened their own IVF center in Prien, where they successfully worked and lead the laboratory for 17 years. In parallel, they managed to lead the IVF lab in in Bad Dürrenberg, Austria (1990-2000).

Tatjana was a very hard worker. She gained international recognition due to her numerous publications. However she was always dedicated to the process of training other embryologists, motivating and

inspiring them; Tatjana and her husband Alfred, were also involved in the establishment of IVF laboratories in 25 IVF centers, in various countries, including for instance, Spain and the Balkan region.

Tatjana Kniewald was a very special person, enthusiastic, open and very warm. She was always ready to help in troubleshooting and to answer everyone's questions about IVF. However, on top of all she was so human and a loyal friend; I remember once when she was an invited speaker, and instead of participating in a dinner which was planned for her she came to visit us in our modest apartment, climbing the stairs of 4 floors to share with us the joy of our newborn son.

This was Tatjana Kniewald. an extraordinary person, a visionary with a lot of joy in life and tireless drive.

As embryologists, we will always remember Ms. Tatjana Kniewald an extraordinary scientist and visionary. We express our condolences to her husband Alfred – the love of her youth, her son Adrian and his wife, Elisabeth and grandson Dominik.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yona Barak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right and a shorter one extending to the left below the main text.

Dr. Yona Barak, BSc, MSc, PhD.