



IN MEMORIAM

Birgit Simone Werner (1981-2019)



Birgit Simone Werner

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of a bright young star in the shoulder and elbow world. Dr. Birgit Simone Werner, corresponding member of the American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons and member of SECEC (Société Européenne pour la Chirurgie de l'Epaule et du Coude), passed away on May 15, 2019, at 38 years of age. She will be dearly missed.

Birgit was born in 1981 in Dortmund, Germany. As a child, she was described as fun loving and carefree. At an early age, she developed a passion for reading. Her brother states she would devour books, leaving stacks of finished books in her path. In addition to scholarly activities, she enjoyed playing tennis, jazz dancing, singing, and playing

the piano. Birgit had a love of life and nature, and this love is what drew her to medicine.

In 2000, Birgit started medical school in Würzburg, Germany, and from the beginning, she knew she wanted to become an orthopedic surgeon. As she progressed through medical school, she became interested in research and shoulder and elbow surgery. In 2005, she started working with Professor Frank Gohlke at the University of Würzburg, who quickly became her mentor. As she worked her way through residency, she was well-known for her intelligence, resilience, and work ethic. After finishing her residency, Birgit traveled to Lyon, France, to conduct a fellowship at the Centre Orthopédique Santy, working with Gilles Walch, Lionel Neyton, and Armand Godenèche. Birgit would speak highly of her time in France; she enjoyed her fellowship and loved the French language and culture.

In 2014, Professor Gohlke recruited Birgit back to Bad Neustadt, Germany. It is there where her research excelled; she developed a joint registry and published over 30 scientific articles. Birgit was passionate about the shoulder and was caught at times describing herself as a “shoulder-making woman,” in analogy to the quote “I’m a shoulder-making man” in the preface of Matsen, Lippitt, Sidles, and Harryman’s textbook.

Unfortunately, Birgit’s accelerating research career was jarred in 2016 when she received a diagnosis of an aggressive form of breast cancer. What followed was an intense battle, but through it all, she persevered and still found time to conduct her research.

As Birgit fought her disease, she also made time to travel and enjoy her love of nature. She traveled to Norway, Iceland, Malta, Valencia, and as she referred to it, her “beloved” Canada. Birgit loved the natural beauty and ruggedness of Canada; she traveled across the country and spent time in the Rocky Mountains, a place she wanted to stay.

In the early hours of May 15, 2019, Birgit quietly passed on, in the presence of her mother, father, and brother. Birgit will be missed. She was a courageous and intelligent person who left us too soon.

George Athwal, MD

*Roth McFarlane Hand and Upper Limb Center,
Western University, London, ON, Canada*

Frank Gohlke, MD
Clinic for Shoulder and Elbow Surgery,
Bad Neustadt/Saale, Germany; ARCUS Clinics,
Pforzheim, Germany

Gilles Walch, MD
Ramsay Générale de Santé, Hôpital Privé Jean Mermoz,
Centre Orthopédique Santy,
Lyon, France