

GENETICS

GENETICISTS AND NBIA-PKAN

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Geneticists continue to publish about “Hallervorden-Spatz” or “former Hallervorden-Spatz” syndrome.

The German NBIA patient group advocates for many years that these names should be abandoned (the American patient group even formally changed its name 2003). NBIA is a rare inherited neurological movement disorder characterized by the progressive degeneration of the nervous system; NBIA means “neurodegeneration with brain iron accumulation”. Another frequently used disease synonym is pantothenate kinase-associated neurodegeneration (PKAN).

The clinical syndrome has been described by the neurologist Julius Hallervorden and the neuropathologist Hugo Spatz. Robert Jay Lifton does not have any material about Hallervorden and Spatz in “The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide” but Ernst Klee in “Auschwitz, die NS-Medizin und ihre Opfer” and Benno Müller-Hill in “Murderous science” mentions both. Professor Hugo Spatz (1888-1969) was docent in Munich 1923, director of Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut Berlin 1937-1945 and director of Max-Planck-Institut für Hirnforschung Gießen 1948-1957. Professor Julius Hallervorden (1882-1965) was department head at Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut Berlin 1938-1945 and at MPI for Brain Research from 1948 on.

The former director of Max-Planck association Professor Hubertus Markl mentioned their involvement in Nazi euthanasia in his lecture on Oct 14, 2000 at MDC in Berlin-Buch (own translation): “Recent research showed that brains of hundreds of euthasia victims killed between 1939 and 1944 in Brandenburg-Görden, were mis-used for research purposes. In a single case Julius Hallervorden was present in person, while children were killed in Görden and brains consecutively analysed in his laboratory... As a biologist it remains for me to declare that this is an eternal dishonor for German bioscience.”

