

Short biography of Ruedi Lüthy

Ruedi Lüthy (born 1941 in Lucerne) studied medicine at the University of Zurich, where he also received his doctorate and habilitation. After this he set up the Department of Infectious Diseases at University Hospital Zurich, subsequently heading it for more than 20 years. At the beginning of the 1980s he was one of the first Aids specialists in Switzerland. He was a co-founder of the Lighthouse, a hospice in for people with Aids, which he directed on a full-time basis for several years. At the beginning of 1987 he was appointed honorary professor at the Medical Faculty of the University of Zurich.

At the end of the 1980s he founded and was president of the Swiss HIV Cohort Study, which made a significant contribution to knowledge about HIV and Aids. In the 1990s Ruedi Lüthy also served as president of the Swiss National AIDS Commission. From 1995 the situation for people with HIV and Aids in Switzerland improved decisively thanks to the availability of highly active retroviral therapies, and the number of deaths and new infections declined dramatically. Since 1997 Ruedi Lüthy has been honorary professor of internal medicine and infectious diseases at the Medical Faculty of the University of Zurich.

In 2003, three years before his retirement, Ruedi Lüthy decided to establish an outpatient HIV clinic in Zimbabwe's capital Harare. In operation since 2004, Newlands Clinic now cares for more than 7,000 patients with HIV/Aids to high medical standards. The clinic also has an ongoing training programme for local doctors and nurses. In the meantime Ruedi Lüthy has handed over executive management to his daughter Sabine Lüthy. Dr Stefan Zimmerli serves as medical director, and Matthias Widmaier is the country director responsible for the administration of Newlands Clinic. However, Ruedi Lüthy continues to get involved on the ground, primarily in the training of local health professionals.

Awards

Ruedi Lüthy has been recognised for his work on multiple occasions, including receiving the 2004 Swiss Award for his contribution to society and being named 2007 European of the Year by Reader's Digest magazine. In 2015 he received not just one, but two awards: the Doron Prize and the Zurich Paradies Stiftung's prize for social innovation. In 2019 the Swiss section of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) presented him with the 2019 Swiss Human Rights Award for his extraordinary life's work. The same year the European AIDS Conference (EACS) gave Ruedi Lüthy its Award for Excellence in HIV Medicine 2019. The University of Bern (2003) and the University of Basel (2019) have awarded him honorary doctorates in recognition of his outstanding academic achievements.