Memorial pages

© 2026 Fondazione Vasculab impresa sociale ETS. All rights reserved.

MEMORIAL PAGES

Prof. Dr. med. Eberhard Rabe

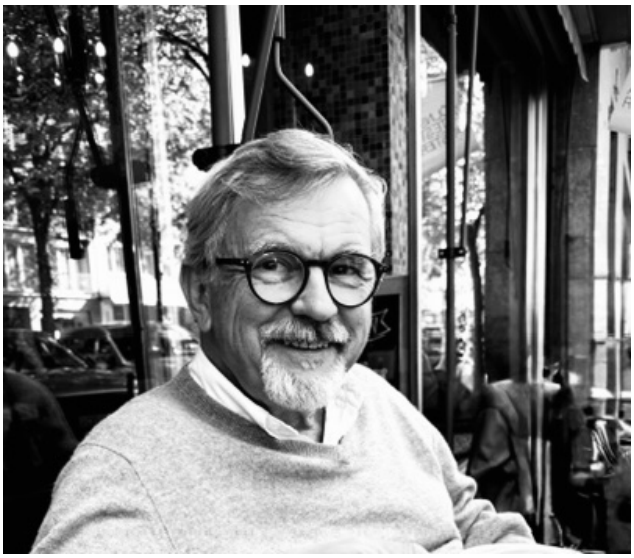
* 25 May 1953 † 16 May 2026

RD Murena-Schmidt

Phlebologist. Praxis für Gefässmedizin, Cologne. Board Member of the German Society of Phlebology and Lymphology (DGPL). Steering Committee Member, Sclerotherapy Working Group of DGPL.
submitted: Jun 5, 2026, accepted: Jun 5, 2026, EPub Ahead of Print: Aug 20, 2026, published: Aug 31, 2026
Conflict of interest: None

DOI: 10.24019/jtavr.259 - Corresponding author: Dr. Renate Dorothea Murena-Schmidt, renate.murena@netcologne.de

© 2026 Fondazione Vasculab impresa sociale ETS. All rights reserved.



Eberhard in Cologne.



Eberhard in Leipzig during the yearly Congress of the German Society.

On 16 May 2026, our long-standing President and Honorary Member Prof. Dr. med. Eberhard Rabe passed away suddenly and completely unexpectedly at the age of 72. Phlebology in Germany, in Europe and around the world has lost one of its most formative figures. Many of us have also lost a teacher, an advisor and a friend.

Eberhard Rabe was born in Trier on 25 May 1953. He began his medical studies in Aachen in 1977 and received his doctorate in 1984. From 1984 to 1988 he worked as a resident under Prof. Norbert Klüken in Essen, where he first came into contact with phlebology – a field that would never let go of him for the rest of his life. In 1988 he moved to the Department of Dermatology at the University Hospital of Bonn, where he headed the phlebology section until his retirement as professor emeritus in 2018. In Bonn he completed his habilitation with the thesis *"Die Venenkrankheiten: Ein dermatologisches Modell chronischer Erkrankungen zwischen experimenteller Grundlagenforschung und klinischer Funktionsdiagnostik"* (Venous diseases: a dermatological model of chronic disease between experimental basic research and clinical functional diagnostics). Retirement in the true sense never followed: after becoming emeritus, he worked in the dermatology and phlebology practice of his partner, PD Dr. med. Felizitas Pannier, in Bonn, where he continued to treat patients until the very end. Together with her he ran numerous phlebology workshops, passing on his knowledge and practical experience to many colleagues.



Eberhard organized the Appenzeller days (a congress for specialised colleagues from Germany, Austria and Switzerland) after Hugo Partsch retired. In the picture a convivial moment, with Eberhard Rabe left and Renate Murena in the middle, Hugo Partsch in front.

His scientific work was exceptionally broad. His main areas of interest were epidemiology, diagnostics, compression therapy, sclerotherapy and the treatment of venous leg ulcers. A milestone was the Bonn Vein Studies, which for the first time provided robust data on the prevalence of venous disease in the German population and remain the epidemiological foundation of evidence-based phlebology to this day. His clinical studies and fundamental research are widely cited internationally. From 1995 onwards, he was a driving force behind guideline development for the diagnosis and treatment of phlebological and lymphological disorders, both in Germany and at European level.

Passing on knowledge was just as important to him. For many of us, his standard textbook *"Grundlagen der Phlebologie"* (Fundamentals of Phlebology) was our very first gateway into the field. With *"Praktische Phlebologie"* (Practical Phlebology), co-edited with Horst E. Gerlach, he created a further reference work for everyday clinical practice. For more than three decades, from 1991 to 2025, he was editor-in-chief of the journal *vasomed*. As congress president of the Bonner Venentage (Bonn Vein Days), he created a forum that has trained and brought together generations of phlebologists over many years. As recently as March 2026, he chaired the 32nd Bonn Vein Days.

His professional life was marked by his tireless commitment to phlebology and lymphology. He joined the board of the German Society of Phlebology (DGP, today DGPL – German Society of Phlebology and Lymphology) in 1991 and led our society as President from 1997 to 2012. These fifteen years also saw the introduction of phlebology as an additional specialist qualification in the German Medical Association's model regulations for specialist training – a decisive step towards the recognition of our field.

The international networking of venous medicine was particularly close to his heart. He was a member of the Executive Board of the Union Internationale de Phlébologie (UIP) and served as its President from 2007 to 2011. He chaired the scientific committee of the UIP World Congress 2009 in Monaco. During his presidency, the UIP launched international consensus groups working towards a worldwide curriculum in phlebology. He later served as President of the European College of Phlebology

and championed common European standards for training, continuing education and certification. Until the very end he took an active part in international congresses – as a speaker, as a partner in discussion, and as someone who brought people together across borders. Beyond the congresses, too, he sought professional exchange: in international online forums such as the phlebology expert network *Vasculab*, he regularly contributed his knowledge and experience, always conducting critical debates in an objective, collegial manner and open to other points of view. He was honorary member of the Vasculab Foundation too. In recognition of his services to international phlebology he received, among other honours, an award from the Australasian College of Phlebology. The many obituaries from societies and colleagues all over the world show how highly he was regarded far beyond Germany.

As a physician, he combined outstanding professional expertise with great care, a strong sense of responsibility and genuine dedication to his patients. He always understood medicine as a combination of scientific excellence and human closeness. With his calm, attentive manner he gave many people confidence, orientation and hope. For his colleagues he was a role model of medical professionalism.

For all our appreciation of his professional achievements, we wish above all to honour Eberhard Rabe the person. Those who met him encountered a warm-hearted, empathetic and humorous man who treated others with respect, patience and sincere compassion. He shared his knowledge generously, encouraged young colleagues and was a valued, diplomatic advisor in difficult situations. To many he was far more than a colleague: a trusted companion and friend. He drew support and strength from his family – his children Gwen, Anne and Daniel and their families, his grandchildren, and his partner Felizitas Pannier, with whom he shared not only his life but also his passion for phlebology. Those who knew him well also admired his broad education and his wide-ranging interests far beyond medicine.

His death leaves a great void. In deep sorrow, but also in grateful remembrance, we look back on the many years we shared and the wonderful times we spent with him. We will always honour his memory. Our heartfelt sympathy goes to Felizitas Pannier, to his children Gwen, Anne and Daniel, to his grandchildren and to all who were close to him.

Eberhard, we will miss you dearly.

On behalf of the Board and the Advisory Board of the DGPL

Dr. Renate Dorothea Murena-Schmidt
Phlebologist
Praxis für Gefässmedizin, Cologne

Board Member of the German Society of Phlebology and Lymphology (DGPL)
Steering Committee Member, Sclerotherapy Working Group of DGPL