

The American Board of Orthodontics awards the 2018 Albert H. Ketcham Memorial Award to Dr. Birte Melsen



Dr. Birte Melsen

The American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) awarded the Albert H. Ketcham Memorial Award, its highest honor, to **Birte Melsen, D.D.S., Dr. Odont.**, of Aarhus, Denmark, on Sunday, May 6 at the Excellence in Orthodontics Luncheon and Awards Ceremony, which was held in conjunction with the 2018 Annual Session of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) in Washington, D.C.

The ABO created this award in 1936 to commemorate the achievements of Dr. Albert H. Ketcham, one of the pioneers in the specialty of orthodontics. The ABO awards this honor annually to an individual who, in the judgment of the award committee, has made a notable contribution to the science and art of orthodontics.

Originally interested in mathematics, Dr. Melsen entered dentistry at the urging of her stepfather because in post-World War II Denmark, he thought it offered a well-paying career. Dr. Melsen said, “But then Dr. Egil Harvold showed me how mathematics could be applied in orthodontics to take care of the mouth and face, and be used in appliance design. Then I found my passion.”

Dr. Melsen graduated with her dental degree from the Royal College of Dentistry in 1964. She obtained her certificate in orthodontics in 1971 and her doctorate in 1974. She also gained education in bone biology from the late Dr. Melvin L. Moss, and joined the bone biology group of Dr. Harold Frost at the Sun Valley workshops.

In 1971, she became the acting head of the Department of Orthodontics at the Royal College. In 1975, she was appointed professor and head of the Department of Orthodontics, which she oversaw until her retirement from that position in 2012. She also has maintained since 1986 a part-time private practice in Lübeck, Germany, which is limited to adult patients.

Since retiring from the Royal College, she has served part-time as professor with the University of West Australia, the University of Hannover in Germany, the University of Kentucky and New York University.

Dr. Melsen has authored six books, 18 book chapters and more than 400 published scientific articles in the fields of growth and development based on research of human autopsy material, bone biology, biomechanics, interdisciplinary treatment, skeletal anchorage and tissue engineering. Dr. Melsen’s interest in skeletal anchorage began in the 1970s with Jens Kølsten Pedersen. In 1996, after more than 20 years of investigation, the Aarhus Mini-Implant System was introduced.

In recent years her professional interests have focused primarily on the fields of skeletal anchorage, virtual imaging and adult orthodontic treatment. She has been supervisor on 18 Ph.D. theses and advisor for research projects in Australia, Brazil, Italy and Thailand. She has since 1975 been a regular lecturer at a large number of the post-graduate programs in the United States and South America and more recently in Australia and various Asian countries.

In addition to her work in the specialty of orthodontics, Dr. Melsen is actively involved in fundraising for third-world children, especially in South America, through the charity Viva.

Dr. Melsen has received many honors for her work. In 2000, she was presented with the Knighthood of Dannebrog 1st degree, the highest award possible for university-affiliated researchers. In 2006, she received the Bagger Sorensen Award and the Jarabak Scholar Award for landmark research, and was honored in 1995 by the American Association of Orthodontists with the Louise Ada Jarabak Memorial International Orthodontic Teachers and Research Award. In 2001 she received the Ernest Sheldon Friel Award from the European Orthodontic Society. She holds honorary doctorates from several universities around the world. She has also been elected distinguished teacher by the European Orthodontic Society and honorary member of the World Orthodontic Society in 2015.

She was 2004 president of the European Orthodontic Society, and has served several terms as president of the Danish Orthodontic Society. She is co-editor of the journals *Craniofacial Research and Orthodontics*, *Journal of Clinical Orthodontics* and *World Journal of Orthodontics*. She has been awarded honorary memberships in over a dozen orthodontic and dental organizations around the world.

On being chosen for the award, Dr. Melsen said: "I am proud and grateful to be honored with the Ketcham award. The older I get, the more I realize that everything we find was already there, and when we try to work against nature it has bad consequences. I have been standing on the shoulders of many and my motto has been: 'Alone we are limited, together we can.' The strong shoulders of Bjørk and Burstone were a basis without which I would not have been here with you today."