In order to understand the cytology regulations in Austria, issued in 1985, it is necessary to know something about the development of cytology in Austria.

The first applications of cytology as a diagnostic method in Austria were published by Schauenstein in the 1920s, by several hematologists (Fleischhacker, Klima) in the 1930s, and by some pathologists – mainly on bronchial cytology – in the 1940s. A broad introduction of this method, based on the publications by Papanicolaou and Traut, started after the Second World War. In the beginning it was difficult to equip cytologic laboratories because the method was not paid for by the insurance companies. It was the privilege of the Austrian Cancer Society to provide the financial basis for the equipment of the first cytologic laboratories in our country and to pay for the smears through almost 1 decade. When I was appointed head of a gynecopathologic laboratory at the University Hospital in Vienna in 1963, an explosion in the number of cytologic smears of the genital tract started. Between 1963 and 1970 the number of smears in Austria increased from 50,000 to 1.2 million.

An investigation in 2000 cone biopsies which we collected during this period revealed a relatively high percentage of negative cones. This was due to a high number of false-positive smears. As most of the false smears were reported from a limited number of laboratories, this must have been due to the improper quality of the cytology laboratories involved. On the basis of this information, we contacted our health officials and succeeded in convincing them that it was necessary to issue regulations in order to improve the quality of cytology. At the same time the Austrian Society for Applied Cytology was founded on the initiation of Professor Navratil, at that time chairman of the Gynecologic Clinic in Graz. The majority of the founding members were clinicians, mainly gynecologists and pulmologists, but only few pathologists. One of the most urgent activities of the Society was to set up a training program for cytologists and cytotechnicians.
The first problem we were confronted with was the general license requirement for medical doctors in Austria. After finishing medical school, a postgraduate training period in a hospital is obligatory in order to get the license for practice. This postgraduate training includes 3 years for general practitioners, 2 years for dental medicine, and 6 years for any speciality. For instance, in pathology the 6-year postgraduate training includes 1 year of clinical medicine, 4 years of pathology, and 1 year optionally. It is also possible to obtain an additional speciality degree (*Additiv-Facharzt*) for certain fields. For this an additional training period of 3 (in special cases 2) years is necessary for formal reasons.

Because of the relatively large number of clinicians involved in cytology—and this was a rather inhomogenous group, we decided that the only way was that of an additional degree. The officials agreed to this solution and issued the following regulation:

1. The additional speciality degree for cytodiagnostics can be obtained by pathologists, specialists for laboratory medicine, pulmologists, urologists, and gynecologists.

2. Pathologists and specialists for laboratory medicine can obtain an additional degree for the whole field of genital and extragenital cytology, gynecologists for gynecologic cytology exclusively, pulmologists for cytology of the respiratory tract exclusively, urologists for urological cytology, etc.

3. The additional training period includes 1 year in histopathology and 2 years in cytology. Only pathologists are exempted from the year of histopathology because this is included in their basic training program for pathology. The training period in histopathology has to be performed in a department of pathology, licensed for postgraduate training in pathology, the training period in cytology in a specialized laboratory, headed by a cytologist and acknowledged as a training laboratory. The training program depends on the basic speciality as mentioned above.

4. The requirements for training institutions are as follows: (a) *histopathology*: department of pathology of a university hospital or of other hospitals licensed for postgraduate training in pathology; (b) *cytology*: licensed laboratory, headed by a cytologist with an additional degree, and with a minimum of 20,000 gynecologic smears and/or 3,000 extragenital smears per year. Training institutions are the departments of pathology of the three universities (Vienna, Graz, Innsbruck) and their subdepartments, the pathology departments of the large city hospitals and the provincial hospitals, and some special laboratories in some cities such as Klagenfurt and Salzburg.

These regulations were issued by the Federal Department of Health in 1985, after a general agreement had been reached 1 year previously. The regulations influenced the development of cytology in Austria positively. By now 113 persons have obtained the additional degree of cytology in Austria,