

Professor Emel Tümbay (1941–2025): A Pioneer of Medical Mycology in Türkiye

Sevtap Arıkan-Akdağlı¹ 

¹ Department of Medical Microbiology, Hacettepe University School of Medicine, Ankara Türkiye

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Professor Emel Tümbay on August 6, 2025, at the age of 84. She was a distinguished pioneer in Medical Mycology. Professor Tümbay was held in the highest esteem by the international scientific community and her colleagues at Ege University's Faculty of Medicine in Türkiye. Her life was marked by extraordinary dedication and lasting contributions to the field.

Born on January 19, 1941, Professor Tümbay graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at Ege University. After completing her residency in Bacteriology and Infectious Diseases at the same institution, she received a two-year fellowship to specialize in Medical



Photograph 1. Prof. Emel Tümbay (1941–2025)

Corresponding Author:
Sevtap Arıkan-Akdağlı

E-mail:
sarikan@hacettepe.edu.tr

Received: September 13, 2025
Accepted: September 17, 2025
Published: September 25, 2025

Suggested citation:
Arıkan-Akdağlı S. Professor Emel Tümbay (1941–2025): A pioneer of medical mycology in Türkiye. Infect Dis Clin Microbiol. 2025;3:334-5

DOI: 10.36519/idcm.2025.857

Mycology under the mentorship of Professor Heinz P. R. Seeliger at the University of Würzburg in Germany. Upon returning to Türkiye, she established the Mycology Laboratory within Ege University's Department of Microbiology and Clinical Microbiology. There, she pioneered the country's first routine Diagnostic Mycology Laboratory, led national field surveys on fungal diseases, and started many research projects. She was also a devoted mentor, training generations of specialists who went on to establish Medical Mycology laboratories and departments across Türkiye. Between 1991 and 1992, she served as Vice Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and she retired from Ege University in 2008.

Her scholarly output was remarkable. One of her most influential works was the pioneering *Atlas of Practical Medical Mycology* (1983), which standardized Turkish terminology and became an indispensable national reference. She also authored a major textbook, *Medical Mycology*, and a historical bibliography on Turkish Clinical Mycology and Fungal Diseases (1896–2004). For 23 years, she served as editor of the *Journal of Infection* (the former official journal of the Turkish Society of Microbiology) and translated several leading international scientific texts into Turkish, reflecting her lifelong commitment to disseminating knowledge.

Professor Tümbay played a central role in organizing many landmark scientific events, including the first Infectious Diseases Congress (1987) and the first National Congress on Fungal Diseases (1999), both in İzmir. She co-edited the Federation of European Microbiological Societies (FEMS) symposium proceedings *Candida* and *Candidamycosis*. As pres-

ident of the Turkish Society of Medical Mycology, she co-organized two International Clinical Mycology Master Classes with Radboud University in 2017 and 2018. Her achievements were recognized with many honors, including the international Rodenwaldt Award (1983) and the Seeliger Award (2002).

She was also a co-founder of several key professional bodies, including the European Confederation of Medical Mycology (ECMM) and the Balkan Mycology Association. In 2011, she founded the Turkish Society of Medical Mycology, serving three terms as its President while also representing Türkiye on the ECMM Council. From 2007 to 2021, she was an honorary board member of the Turkish Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (KLİMİK).

Professor Tümbay was known for her devotion to Atatürk's principles, her passion for science, and her tireless work ethic. She was an outstanding educator, inspiring students with her lectures and captivating colleagues with her insightful presentations. To everyone she encountered, she conveyed not only scientific knowledge but also values of honesty, integrity, and passion for one's work. Beyond academia, she generously devoted herself to her family, her students and colleagues, her books, the sea, and animals. Conversations with her—whether about mycology, life, love, loyalty, or animals—were always memorable, leaving a profound and lasting impact.

We bid farewell to our dearest Professor with deep respect and affection. She will be greatly missed and forever remembered. Her memory will endure in the continued pursuit of science and human values.