



The International Society for Behçet's Disease loses a distinguished member

The International Society for Behçet's Disease mourns Prof. Ignatius Benedetto (Ignazio) Olivieri, a distinguished member of our Society, President of the 17th International Conference on Behçet's Disease (15-17.09.2016, Matera, Italy) and past President of the Italian Society for Rheumatology (2014-16), who passed away on July 28, 2017, at the age of 64, in Trivigno (Potenza), Italy.

Prof. Olivieri - born March 21, 1953 in Matera – was an internationally renowned rheumatologist who had a long standing interest in all aspects of spondyloarthropathy, enthesitis and Behçet's Disease. With 456 PubMed-registered publications, among them 46 on Behçet's Disease, he provided an extensive scientific work in these areas, in many occasions together with his wife Angela Padula, also a rheumatologist, as a co-author. Prof. Olivieri was a member of the International Team for the Revision of the International Criteria for Behçet's Disease (ITR-ICBD) and was involved in the development of classification criteria and therapeutic guidelines in ankylosing spondylitis and psoriatic arthritis. He organized many scientific meetings in his home town of Matera with the 17th ICBD being one of the most prominent ones. He fought an incurable illness over the last couple of years, during which time he continued working and teaching.

In addition to our Society, which Prof. Olivieri served several times as Council member, he has been a member of the International Society on the Assessment of Spondyloarthritis (ASAS), Group for Research and Assessment of Psoriatic and Psoriatic Arthritis (GRAPPA). He was also member of the Editorial Board of the annual supplement on Behçet's Disease and Familial Mediterranean Fever of Clinical and Experimental Rheumatology.

Besides his immense scientific knowledge, Prof. Olivieri was a person of great humanity and sensibility, centering before the interests of his hospital, the patient himself. Further, he was active among the Matera Inside's friends, a platform for enhancing cultural excellence in his home region. He advanced to one of the most esteemed physicians of the San Carlo Hospital of Potenza, so that in 2016, he was elected Lucan Person of the Year with 36% over 21,000 casted votes in a poll launched by the Italian journal Basilicata daily, indicating the respect he enjoyed among the population of Basilicata.

■ LUCANO DELL'ANNO

Boom di accessi sul sito del Quotidiano del Sud
per la consultazione partita a metà dicembre

Ignazio Olivieri uomo del 2016

Prof. Olivieri received his high school diploma from "E. Duni" high school in Matera in 1971. After a Degree in Medicine with honours at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Pisa in 1978, he specialized in rheumatology at the Rheumatic Disease Unit of the Institute of Medical Pathology 1, University of Pisa until 1983. His research was dedicated to seronegative spondyloarthritis and Behçet's disease (supervisors: Profs. G. Pasero and S. Bombardieri). After finishing his specialty training, he became Visiting Research Fellow at the Rheumatism Foundation Hospital, Heinola, Finland. He returned to Pisa and continued his clinical and research work as a rheumatology specialist and from 1987 as a Senior Investigator, Head of the Pisa Spondyloarthritis and Behçet's Disease Study Groups. In 1993 he moved to Bologna to work as a Senior Investigator, Head of the Bologna Spondyloarthritis and Behçet's Disease Study Groups, Rheumatic Disease Unit, Policlinico S. Orsola-Malpighi. In October 1998 he returned to his home town, Matera, to take over duties as a Consultant Rheumatologist and to become Director of the Rheumatology Department of Lucania, San Carlo Hospital of Potenza and Madonna delle Grazie Hospital of Matera and Director of the Istituto Reumatologico Lucano (IReL), which he founded and developed over the years into an Italian Center of Excellence.

A jewel of his own "rheumatology" were about 300 patients with Behçet's disease, of which only about 30 were Lucani; all the others (including Francesco Scuderi, an Italian sprinter and Olympic athlete, who announced that he defeated Behçet's disease in Potenza) came from all over Italy. "We can say that in Rheumatology we are the only ones to do health immigration: they come here from Calabria, Campania, Sicily ..." joked Prof. Olivieri in a journal interview. With 11 physicians, (9 at San Carlo and 2 in Matera), he worked hard to increase the capacity of his Departments. "Our Departments is a pole of excellence that invites patients from all over Italy. But they need more funds." declared Prof. Olivieri recently.

Among his academic battles was the recognition of the Institute of Nursing and Research of the Department of Rheumatology and the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Basilicata Studies, because many young people, studying abroad, no longer return to their own land. Moreover, Prof. Olivieri had raised the danger that the poor Basilicata region would remain "without doctors because no one would want to practice in Basilicata."

On January 21, 2016, he was awarded with a "high moral gratitude" during a ceremony at the organized by the Federation of Workers of Italy - Regional Consulate of Basilicata and the Cultural Movement "Work and Development for Basilicata". The motivation of recognition was his "commitment to scientific research in the medical field and to have given honor to Basilicata".



"With the death of Dr. Ignatius Olivieri, Basilicata loses not only an excellent professional, but also a man of great sensibility and humanity ", declared Basilicata Region president Marcello Pittella," particularly impressed by news that despite his serious illness, he did not stop working for his patients and the region. The Italian Society of Rheumatology announced his death with the term "a great Loss for Italian Rheumatology" and Prof. Mauro Galeazzi, its president, said that "With Prof. Olivieri disappears a distinguished colleague who has been the proud of Italian rheumatology in our country and abroad. His example should inspire us all to deepen our commitment to rheumatic diseases with greater strength and determination."

Prof. Olivieri is taking care of his home region even after his death. His last target, the establishment of a research center at the San Carlo hospital in Potenza, "will be carried out in agreement with the Basilicata Region" as Mr. Rocco Maglietta, general manager of the hospital association has declared.

For me personally, Prof. Ignazio Olivieri, will be an unforgettable friend. He kindly contributed to several common academic works, including my books on Adamantiades- Behçet's Disease, 2003 and Pathogenesis and Treatment of Acne and Rosacea, 2014 and he participated at the International Team for the Revision of the International Criteria for Behçet's Disease, 2014. Ignazio was glad to hear that I knew his city, since I have stayed in Basilicata for 3 months as a Greek student committee member, which participated in 1980 at the European activity "Il giovani fanno l'Europa". Despite my absence from his Congress 2016 in Matera, I have promised to visit him and his city again in 2019, on the occasion of Matera becoming the cultural city of Europe. Unfortunately, this promise cannot be realized.

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