

Obituary

In Memoriam Jean Cohen (1941–2004)

After a prolonged illness, from which he had been recovering, Jean Cohen suddenly passed away on November 12, 2004.

After studying physics and biochemistry and gaining a PhD degree at the University of Orsay/Paris, Jean entered the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique in 1969, where he worked for 35 years as a virologist. Jean devoted almost his entire professional career to the study of the structure and molecular biology of rotaviruses, a major cause of infantile gastroenteritis in humans and of diarrhea in the young of a large variety of animals.

Jean is rightly regarded by many as the father of the molecular biology of rotaviruses. He published/co-published the results of his work in over 100 scientific papers. His achievements were many: the discovery of the transcriptase activity of rotavirus subviral particles *in vitro*, description of the rotavirus genome from the early days of cloning and sequencing onwards, studies of molecular mechanisms of viral replication including functions of virus-coded nonstructural proteins and contribution to the elucidation of the atomic structure of VP6. He explored the virus-like particles produced by recombinant baculoviruses in various ways, and many of his later studies related to immune responses to rotavirus infections as well as to vaccine research.

Jean was a researcher with immense insight into his subject, lots of original and creative ideas, an always searching and questioning mind and exceptional skills at the bench. He was enthusiastic for his work and stimulated many who collaborated with him. As a scientist, thinker, author, mentor, friend and colleague, he was generous, thoughtful, modest, and an inspiration to those who knew him. He listened carefully, engaged ideas, loved hardy debates, and his advice and collaboration were often sought. He was widely read and possessed a deep sense of humour. He is sorely missed by his family, friends and colleagues, but will live on in our memory.

Gif-sur-Yvette/France, Houston TX/USA
December 2004

*Annie Charpilienne
Ulrich Desselberger
Mary K Estes
Didier Poncet*

