OBITUARY

Obituary

Mario A. Mercuri MD (1950–2011)

Pietro Ruggieri MD, PhD

Published online: 18 February 2012

© The Association of Bone and Joint Surgeons® 2012

Mario Mercuri (Fig. 1) was one of the finest orthopaedic surgeons who practiced at the Rizzoli Institute. He passed away in May 2011 owing to complications of cancer, a disease that he had been personally fighting for approximately 3 years and that he had been fighting his entire professional career to help patients with cancer.

Professor Mercuri was a skilled surgeon, an excellent doctor, and wonderful man. He was born in Rovigo, a small town in Veneto, not far from Bologna on December 7, 1950. When he was a boy and young student he had many interests, played sports, especially soccer, and had many friends. While studying Medicine in Bologna he lost his older brother who had acute leukemia and this loss and sadness likely influenced his future choices as a doctor.

When Mario began to study orthopaedic surgery he initially was dedicated to traumatology and knee surgery. After a short time as an assistant in the Orthopaedic Hospital in Cortina d'Ampezzo, at that time part of the Rizzoli, he was assigned to the Department of Orthopaedics directed by Professor Campanacci at Rizzoli in Bologna. Mario then progressively focused on the study and treatment of musculoskeletal tumors. He became Associate Professor at the University of Bologna in 1999, and after Professor Campanacci's death in January 1999, succeeded him as head of the department. During the next 13 years Mario substantially advanced surgery in the Musculoskeletal Oncology Department at Rizzoli and was dedicated not only to orthopaedic oncology but also to prosthetic reconstructions, complex joint revisions, and sports medicine.

Fig. 1 Mario A. Mercuri MD. (Published with permission from The Rizzoli Institute, Bologna, Italy.)

Mario authored or coauthored more than 400 scientific papers published in national and international journals and spoke at more than 280 national or international meetings. He assumed Professor Campanacci's position as Director of the Rizzoli Annual International Course on Musculoskeletal Pathology and was actively involved in teaching activities of the School of Orthopaedic Surgery at Rizzoli. Mario was particularly dedicated to the field of reconstruction in musculoskeletal oncology and he actively participated in the evolution of modular prosthetic systems together with the University of Wien, the Mayo Clinic, and the Moffitt Cancer Center. He especially focused on surgery of pelvic tumors.

In all of these activities, in surgery and teaching, he infused his human qualities: Mario was a true friend for his patients, coworkers, staff surgeons, and residents. He was a perfect mentor and chief as he was very generous in sharing his technical and surgical skills with other surgeons

P. Ruggieri (✉)
IV Department of Orthopaedics and Orthopedic Oncology,
Rizzoli Institute, University of Bologna, Via Pupilli 1,
40136 Bologna, Emilia Romagna, Italy
e-mail: pietro.ruggieri@ior.it

and residents. For many of his patients he was like a relative, and for all of them, a friend. He never was so tired or so busy that he could not dedicate time and attention to them, even on Sundays or Christmas. He was an example for all of us who had the privilege of working with him. His most valuable legacies are his generosity and humane qualities that were gifts to patients and colleagues alike. Mario traveled frequently to participate in meetings all over the world, yet he always was present and attentive when needed by his department and his patients.

Despite his busy professional life, he was a loving father and husband. He and his wife Stefania were married for more than 32 years and have two wonderful sons. Mario and Stefania raised their children with love and discipline. In his limited free time, Mario was able to give them his sense of family and to be a warm and dedicated father and

husband. He dedicated time to his friends and colleagues as well, regularly organizing many social activities. He organized dinners at every change of assignment for residents and staff surgeons and never missed one.

During his last 2½ years, despite fighting cancer, he was more active than ever in surgery, research, and teaching. This was his way of life and the life he loved: being dedicated to work and his patients was his choice since he became a physician, and he did not change his style or dedication during the last years of his life. His wife and children understood this and were close and supportive of his choices.

Mario Mercuri was a great surgeon and a gentleman. His outstanding contributions to patient care, research, and education in orthopaedic oncology will be sorely missed at Rizzoli Institute.