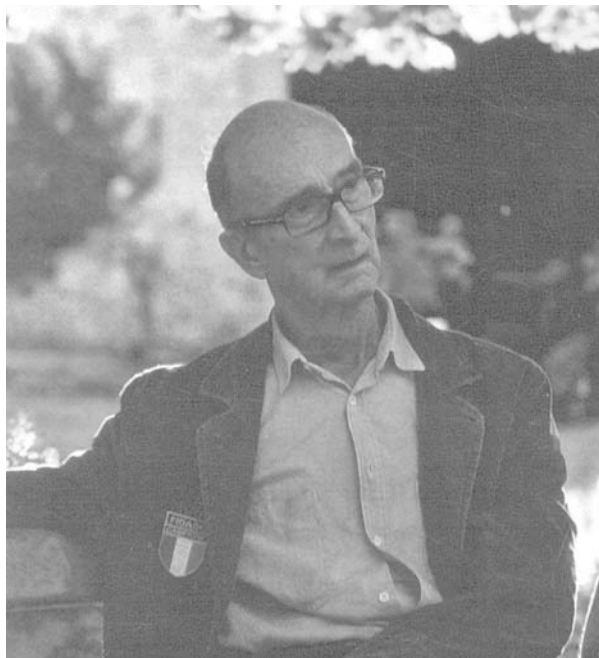


IN MEMORIAM

## Prof. Mario Serio (1937-2010)



Italian Endocrinology lost a great mentor, Prof. Mario Serio. He died in a tragic accident in the mountains on November 11, 2010 at the age of 73, during one of his several hunting trips where, as always, he was accompanied by his favorite dogs.

Mario Serio was born in Subbiano (Arezzo) on February 12, 1937, and graduated with a degree in Medicine in Florence in 1962. He began his clinical research activity at the Faculty of Gerontology at the University of Florence directed by Prof. Francesco M. Antonini, where he worked as an Assistant for six years, starting in 1964. He also obtained a PhD in Gerontology, in Cardiovascular diseases and in Endocrinology, a subject which fascinated him and convinced him about the importance of the measurement of plasma hormones. For that purpose, in 1970, he spent a study period in London at the Steroid Research Unit of the Department of Chemical Pathology at the Medical School of St. Mary's Hospital, directed by Prof. Vivian H.T. James, a scientist Mario has always greatly admired. In London, Mario learnt the complex plasmatic testosterone measurement technique through competitive protein binding after paper chromatography of plasma extracts.

Coming back from London, he moved from the Faculty of Gerontology to the Faculty of Endocrinology in Florence,

directed by Prof. Giorgio Giusti. There, Mario was able to equip a Laboratory, where, together with a team of young colleagues, he rapidly developed several methodological innovations for steroid measurement, which allowed him to study the adrenal function and the secretory function of the testis, the correlation between prolactin and adrenal androgens and the endocrine aspects of male infertility. The results of these studies were published in international Journals and gave him the opportunity to be invited to speak at several International Congresses on Hormonal Steroids and at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Endocrinology (Melbourne, 1980).

Winner of a national competition for Full Professor of Endocrinology in 1980, Mario Serio became Chair of Endocrinology at the University of Sassari (Sardinia), where he worked for two years before being asked to become Chair of Andrology in Florence. Due to the scientific reputation of the Florentine Andrology, Florence in 1989 hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Andrology. Mario Serio was one of the founders of the European Academy of Andrology and was also invited to give a plenary lecture at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Andrology (Salzburg, 1997).

At the end of 1987, when Prof. Giorgio Giusti retired from office, Mario progressively reduced his activities in andrology and, leaving more space for young researchers, dedicated himself, with the same success and important results, to other research fields, such as endocrine autoimmunity, organ transplants, stem cells characterization and the pleiotropic actions of the PPAR $\gamma$  agonists.

Mario Serio also fulfilled many administrative duties, such as Director of the Department of Clinical Physiopathology for two terms (1990-1996) and then as delegate of the Biomedical Area in the Academic Senate of the University of Florence (1996-1999). He was then elected President of the Italian Society of Endocrinology (1999-2001) and President of the Italian Society of Medical Andrology (2004-2006).

A bright and keen researcher, Mario Serio always believed that research progress was closely tied to the development of new technologies, such as steroid measurement in mass spectrometry and the new techniques of molecular and cellular biology which enabled him to create patents then transferred to Pharmaceutical Companies or to the National

Health Service. As well as engaging in it himself, Mario Serio also taught a group of researchers how to do research and to love science: they are presently the core of one of the most prestigious Endocrinological Italian Schools. Mario carried on this educational activity even during his last days, giving suggestions, ideas that he frequently discussed with his coworkers, but above all with the youngest students and with the scholars.

His creativity and energy together with his impetuous and keen temper enlivened our Congresses where he never spared us of his constructive criticism.

Italian Endocrinology and Andrology owe a lot to Mario Serio. He seemed to be gruff, but on the inside he was good and sweet, affectionate to his youngest students and lovely and very fond of his family. During his little free time, he often hunted in the mountains which he frequently called "his mountains" with his dogs, which he trained with severity and strictness. "His" mountains betrayed him, bringing him to a sudden, unforeseen, and tragic, but also rapid death which struck him down while he was doing an activity which made him happy, and maybe for this reason, it was a less difficult death.

We miss Mario and we will continue to miss him, but his severity, his love for the truth, and his intellectual honesty will always be a constant guide for his students and for everyone who directly or indirectly, worked with him both in the Laboratory and in the Clinic, besides for Rosalba, Irene, Viola, and Daria.

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