

Obituary: Professor Jean-Paul Chevrel

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It is both an honor and a difficult task for me to write these lines about Jean-Paul Chevrel. Our friend died last May 2006 from a bladder cancer. I knew this indirectly from his nearest collaborator Jean-Luc Dumas, just some hours before his funeral, which was expected in the privacy of the family.

Jean-Paul Chevrel was first a clinical anatomist, it means an anatomist whose research and teaching were directed toward clinical application of anatomy. For us, who are also clinical anatomists, it seems evident nowadays, but in the late seventies and early eighties, it was not so clear and we all know that it remains so, still now in some countries and with some colleagues. “*He was a pioneer in the promotion of the concept of clinical anatomy*” (Bruno Grignon). “*He was one of those who formalize a scientific policy and defend its image at the higher level*” (Jean-Luc Dumas).

Perhaps this sensitivity to clinical application of anatomical knowledge and research came from his second job. As a general surgeon, he was involved in digestive surgery and in abdominal wall repair. This was the reason why “*he was also one of the cofounders of the GREPA (the French group for research and study about the abdominal wall) with J Loygue (Paris), R Stoppa (Amiens) and JY Barbin (Nantes). This group became soon the European Hernia Society (EHS)*” (Olivier Armstrong). Jean-Paul Chevrel was the creator of *Hernia*, an international journal devoted to repair of abdominal parietal deficiencies, “*he succeeded to be indexed*” (Olivier Armstrong).

For most of us, Jean-Paul Chevrel had been a major contributor to the growth of our journal, *Surgical and Radiologic Anatomy*. At the best of my knowledge, this journal, founded as *Anatomia Clinica* by Pierre Rabischong, was managed by a team of French, English and American editors, into which Jean-Paul Chevrel was early incorporated. Jean-Paul Chevrel became the only editor-in-chief in mid-1987 and kept this charge up to mid-1999, when I got this responsibility. It is in collaborating to SRA that Jeanne (the Springer representative in Paris) and Jean-Paul met and fell in love. I knew Jean-Paul Chevrel progressively as my position grew in SRA managing team. Jean-Paul Chevrel was first involved in developing SRA, both in quality and in worldwide circulation. For the first goal, he was attached to both the scientific level and writing quality of the articles published in SRA, it was the first thing I learnt from him. For the second one, he tried to create links between the European clinical anatomists (through the *European Association of Clinical Anatomy*), the British and American clinical anatomists (before they create their own journal, *Clinical Anatomy*) and the East-Asian clinical

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anatomists, essentially in Japan and in China, then in South Korea. In Europe, beside old and close relationships with German clinical anatomists, he was attentive to East-Europe colleagues and took part in many congresses in Romania and Bulgaria. For its long relationship with the American colleagues, he let a good memory to Don Cahill: “*Jean-Paul and I knew each other for over 20 years during which time I had the privilege of serving twice on his Editorial Board. After I became editor-in-chief of Clinical Anatomy, we became friendly rivals, but Jean-Paul was always the winner, always one step ahead of me. He and Jeanne set the standard in the world of clinical anatomy.*” Because he was conscious of the importance of anatomical knowledge in medical imaging and of medical imaging in anatomical research, he wanted to symbolize this and changed the name of the journal from *Anatomia Clinica* to *Surgical and Radiologic Anatomy*.

For many of us, Jean-Paul Chevrel was also one of the founders of the *European Association of Clinical Anatomy*. From him, this creation was the result of both a personal European conviction (he felt as a European citizen) and a political view (as SRA editor-in-chief, he felt the necessity to first lean on European colleagues to support the nascent clinical anatomy). He found here the strong support of Reinhard Putz, an Austrian colleague leading the Munich Anatomical Institute, and very close friendly relationships developed between Jean-Paul and Jeanne, Reinhard and Renate. Up to his retirement and illness, Jean-Paul Chevrel was a regular contributor to EACA congresses. We will keep from him the memory of a smart, elegant and courteous Secretary General. “*With him a very famous man of the anatomical community gets*

lost” (Fritz Anderhuber), and “*He will stay for ever with us, belonging to the fathers of our clinico-anatomical society*” (Josef Stingl).

For the French anatomists, Jean-Paul Chevrel will first remain SRA editor-in-chief. Perhaps because its academic position in Bobigny, University Paris-North, he never got the upper position either among the Parisian anatomists or among the French ones. But we admired its fighting spirit as soon as SRA or clinical anatomy was the discussed topic. His position in a “new” faculty, created after spring 1968, and his open-mindedness explain that Bobigny medical faculty has been a kind of laboratory for new methods in anatomical teaching. He was also the promoter and the main coordinator in a new French collection of four anatomical textbooks entitled “*Anatomie clinique*”. Because his European and international commitment, “*he was a nice ambassador of French anatomy*” (Jean-Luc Dumas). I am not sure that the French colleagues, who are so few to attend the international congresses, have understood the leading position of Jean-Paul Chevrel in this field and the nice image he and a few of us have given worldwide from the French anatomy.

Last, but not least, Jean-Paul Chevrel was a Man, with a great M, with great human qualities. He treated everybody very considerably. “*He was interested in helping young people to improve and integrating them in National and European authorities*” (Olivier Armstrong). Actually, I learnt my job of editor-in-chief beside Jean-Paul. We will always keep the image of an “*elegant combativeness*” (Jean-Luc Dumas).

My deep thanks to Jean-Paul’s friends who sent me some lines about him, from which I have taken some words to complete my own thoughts (*in italics*).