

## Cesare Fieschi

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*A tutti - e anche agli amici e  
allievi e discepoli - lascio il  
mio ricordo e la mia gratitudine.  
Vivete felici e prosperi  
Cesare Fieschi*

2 Maggio 1932

17 Giugno 2016

Translation of the handwriting on the photo: “To everybody, to my friends and affectionate pupils I leave the memory of me and my gratitude. Be happy in your life.” Cesare

Cesare Fieschi died on June 17, 2016, in Rome, at the age of 84.

He is unanimously considered the one who introduced the stroke field in Italy. We might mention his titles and honors, first among the others, the lifetime achievement award by the Cerebral Blood Flow and Metabolism Society. Indeed, he was one of the founders of the Society, and a leader in the groundbreaking, international “blood flow group”. The mention, however, would be reductive.

His pioneer role was deep. It exceeded boundaries of scientific knowledge to include changes in the Italian neurology establishment itself. He meant to drive insights from research on physiopathology of cerebral circulation into effective treatment in the clinical setting. He pursued this path in years in which the neurology was busy in producing uninspired classifications of rare diseases.

Students could sense his innovative breakthrough. In Siena and then in Rome, as a very young professor of neurology, he would reach the teaching room riding a vespa, or during the lesson he would mention the excessive power of drug companies. Those were minor signs, properly perceived by students as expressions of substantial difference from the conservative, self-referent, established academy. The ties with eminent laboratories in the States, and with Seymour Kety and Louis Sokoloff in particular, were a sensible momentum to his innovative efforts. He has been constantly eager to encourage residents and collaborators to get benefit from his prestigious scientific connections. One of the most relevant reasons for the appreciation and recognition that we owe him concerns the opportunity for many of his residents and fellows to spend long time abroad for being trained and building up innovative expertise. This was a remarkable aspect of his authentic generosity.

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He served as full professor in Siena (1969–1978) and then in Rome. At the Sapienza, in Rome, he was able to set up a section of the neurology unit uniquely dedicated to cerebrovascular diseases, *de facto* the first stroke unit in Italy. He also served as president of the Italian Society of Neurology. In 2003, the President of the Italian Republic awarded the gold medal for meritorious public health service.

Effective generosity, indefatigable dynamism and extraordinary insight were in Cesare Fieschi a unique, extremely powerful and beneficial mix. He was a positive energy *per se*, which could affect whomever had the

privilege to meet him, being they students, patients or colleagues.

He was not without contradictions, as it seems to be the case for most outstanding personalities. He had an innate authoritativeness. He would exhibit self-confidence and aristocratic essence probably expression of centuries old family lineage. At the same time, his manners were friendly and unpretentious. His care for social problems was hearty to the point to embrace coherent political choices. For all these reasons, students were used to sympathetically name him the Red Baron.