In memoriam Professor Thierry Frébourg

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The French geneticist Prof. Thierry Frébourg suddenly passed away on March 13, 2021 at the age of 60 years. He had tireless energy, great humanity, great culture and broad scientific knowledge that he shared with his colleagues, patients and students. He was dignified, tolerant, respectful, generous and cheerful. He was a sportsman, a dancer, and he loved music and the arts. He adored the sea and the French West Indies. He created, structured and developed genetic services in Normandy, deploying his energy to innovate and bring people together.

After he obtained his M.D. at Rouen University in 1986, his Ph.D. in Molecular Biology at the University of Paris VII in 1990 and completed his postdoctoral fellowship at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School in Boston, he created the Department of Genetics at the Rouen University Hospital and was the architect of an outstanding personalized medicine and research programme; in

1993 he created a molecular genetics laboratory, in 1996 a clinical genetics unit, in 2003 a laboratory for somatic genetics of tumors, and more recently he had taken over as the head of the cytogenetics unit. At the same time, he created a small research group which grew very quickly over the years to become the current active Inserm (National Institute of Health and Medical Research) Unit 1245 « Genomic and Personalized Medicine in Cancer and Neurological disorders».

As a conductor of a symphony, he united teams from all over Normandy. Beyond that, he was a major player in genetics at local, regional, national, European and world level. He created the Rouen Institute for Research and Innovation in Biomedicine (IRIB), he coordinated the inter-regional university hospital federation (FHU), he was assigned important roles in national medical and scientific organizations, he was a member of the Marescaux commission for the Hospital-University Institutes (IHU), he was co-director of the Multi-agency thematic institute (ITMO) for Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics for Alliance for Life and Health Sciences (AVIESAN), he coordinated the writing of the France Genomic Medicine Plan (PFMG) 2025. He was the investigator-coordinator of the DEFIDIAG pilot project, a national clinical trial in intellectual disability, he initiated monthly regional and national multidisciplinary meetings for patients and families with hereditary cancer predispositions; for LFS patients carrying different *TP53* mutations he had the goal to improve the treatment of patients affected with tumors and to improve the clinical management and cancer prevention in carriers at risk. He was a founding member of the European Reference Network (ERN) on genetic tumour risk syndromes (GENTURIS) and coordinated the writing of the European guidelines for patients with heritable *TP53*-related cancers, which were published last year. He was also the chair of the Li-Fraumeni Syndrome Association (LFSA)-France international chapter. One of his major scientific interests was in the *TP53* related tumor predisposition syndrome, since 1995 his lab has been in charge of the molecular diagnosis of the Li-Fraumeni syndrome. He made outstanding contributions to *p53* research. As a

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world-class oncogeneticist, he has been at the forefront of research on the Li-Fraumeni Syndrome, spearheading international efforts to build up clinical definitions, to understand genotype–phenotype correlations, and to interpret genomic variants. His achievements are exceptional and he leaves us with a long-lasting legacy. He also contributed to all cancer predispositions, and to other genetic diseases. His research group combines clinical expertise with genomic technologies, bioinformatics, statistical analyses and functional analyses of genetic variants.

With the curious, lively and enthusiastic temperament that characterized him, he breathed energy into everything he did. He was a great speaker, highly enthusiastic and passionate. He marked generations of students by hammering out the great messages of genetics from his clinical experience and ethical reflection with many of them choosing to embrace genetics after crossing his path. His dedication to his patients and to patients all over the world was absolute,

he always gave the best medical advice, trying to alleviate their suffering. He was a defender of public service and equity of access to care with a deep commitment to community service.

It is on this admirable heritage that we will pursue our mission and the road he has traced for us. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, colleagues and students.

Today our thoughts are with his family, especially his wife and children.

The Rouen Genetics Team

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