

OBITUARY

In memory of Professor Virgilio Gallai

On 26 January 2004, Professor Virgilio Gallai passed away after struggling for the past two years with a tremendous disease. It overcame him despite his courage and determined fight, which drove him to participate in the life of his clinic and in the organization of national and international scientific events until just a few days before his death. This determination and courage were the *leit motif* of his life, letting him and his group obtain important goals in various fields of neurology, in particular that of headache.

His interest for headaches began more than 25 years ago with the creation of the Interuniversity Centre for the Study of Headache and Neurotransmitter Disorders, which over the years, in addition to Perugia, has involved other centres of national importance in the field of headaches: the Universities of Rome, Bari, Sassari, Naples, Florence, Siena and Modena.

His studies in the field of headaches were not limited only to the clinical aspects, but also the physiopathological aspects, in particular, involving biochemical and neurotransmitter modifications in migraine and chronic daily headache.

I remember the first time that I met Professor Gallai in 1990. At that moment I was working at the Faculty of Pharmacology at the University of Perugia and he invited me to join his group. He expressed an urgent need to create a permanent neurochemical laboratory at his clinic that would be dedicated to the study of biochemical and neurotransmitter modifications in patients with headache. He asked me if I could help him reach this objective. He told me that this field was in great expansion and that these studies would give fundamental results, even if, according to him the difficulties of setting up reliable experimental models and of studying patients during headache attacks would represent major obstacles. I accepted the challenge and since then I have always followed his advice and encouragement. Together with Professor Giovanni Mazzotta, Dr Andrea Alberti and others who have collaborated with Professor Gallai over the years, I have been able to contribute to the vast research field concerning the pathogenetic mechanisms of headache, and in particular, migraine.

With the force and tenacity of his activity, Professor Gallai contributed to the development and success of the Italian Society for the Study of Headaches (SISC), of which he was President from January 2000 to June 2002. During his Presidency, membership tripled to more than 800, placing SISC among the most important national headache societies, and second in size after the American Headache Society.

His interest in headaches peaked with the foundation of *The Journal of Headache and Pain*, official journal of SISC and the Italian Society of Pain Clinicians, of which he was Editor-in-Chief until his death. Professor Gallai was also President of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Diagnostic and Therapeutic Guidelines for Migraine and Cluster Headache, whose activity produced a volume in Italian and a version in English, the latter published in *The Journal of Headache and Pain* in 2001.

Together with Professor Luigi Alberto Pini, Professor Gallai perceived the urgency of writing a text in Italian dedicated exclusively to headaches not only for specialists in the field, but also for those who were interested in furthering their understanding of headaches or who had to deal with headache pathology in daily practice. Because of this interest, a treatise on headaches was published in 2002, with the contributions of numerous Italian experts in the field.

His undeniable professional qualities and intense scientific activity carried out in the field of headaches, attested to by the numerous articles published in international journals, reached their maximum recognition with the selection of Professor Virgilio Gallai as Co-Chairman, with Professor Giuseppe Nappi, of the XI Congress of the International Headache Society (IHS), held in Rome on 13–16 September 2003. The Congress was a great success not only because of the presence of so many headache experts, but also because it reached the highest level of participation of all IHS congresses.

He was a difficult man, of few words, strict, who essentially wanted the most from every one of his collaborators and from all those who were involved with him in projects or in common objectives, university or otherwise.

The members of his team were not the only scientific 'pupils', there were many in Italy and abroad who he encouraged to dedicate themselves to headaches and who are now slowly asserting themselves in this field.

His premature death, only a few days after the passing of another prominent Italian in the neurological and headache world, Professor Francomichele Puca, has left an enormous vacancy. As his assistant I would like to remember his message of enthusiasm and dedication which will always represent a lasting

example for us but also for all researchers in the field of headache.

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