



Obituary for Professor Giuseppe Nappi

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Professor Giuseppe Nappi passed away peacefully on 7 April 2026. Although his body had been weakened by age, his mind remained as sharp and active as ever until the very end.

He was born in a small town near Naples and started his academic career in Pavia, where he was appointed Full Professor of Neurology in 1986. In 1998, he became Full Professor of Neurology at the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, where he retired in 2011. But the idea of fully retiring was out of the question for him, so he maintained his position as scientific director of the Casimiro Mondino National Neurological Institute in Pavia until 2016.

Of all the illustrious roles he was appointed to, this latter was possibly the dearest to his heart. Founded in 1917 by Prof. Casimiro Mondino with the strategic support of Nobel Prize winner Camillo Golgi, the Mondino Institute is the oldest research and care neurological institute in Italy, with more than 100 beds and several departments. Nappi was appointed Scientific Director in 1989 and, in addition to promoting excellence in care and research in close collaboration with the University of Pavia (whose Rector presides over the Institute), he was also the driving force behind the construction of the modern headquarters in 2003.

However, Prof. Nappi’s activities extended far beyond the boundaries of Pavia. Prof. Nappi was a world-renowned scientist specialising in various areas of neurology, including neuroendocrinology, chronobiology and neurodegeneration, but it is in the headaches field that he truly made a difference.

Professor Nappi worked tirelessly to establish and promote the study of primary headaches as an area of extraordinary scientific, socio-economic and cultural significance, given their complex pathophysiology, epidemiological impact and associated disability. If migraine has acquired the dignity and centrality, it has today at national and international levels, it is thanks to scholars like Giuseppe Nappi, who anticipated the importance of various issues and promoted scientific research in innovative directions, bringing the level of knowledge in this complex field to heights unimaginable just a few decades ago.

Professor Nappi was a builder in many senses. Not only did he establish the Pavia Headache Centre in 1971, but he also played a key role in founding important scientific societies such as the Italian Society for the Study of Headaches and the European Headache Federation — of which he became President — and the International Headache Society. He set one of the first examples of interuniversity collaboration, founding and funding the Interuniversity Centre

for Headache and Adaptive Disorders. Internationally, he promoted the development of research in the field of headaches in countries that were considered emerging at the time, such as some Eastern European and Latin American nations, in the latter case also through the Italian Linguistic Group of the International Headache Society, of which he was coordinator for many years and many other collaborative projects, such as the Colombo 2000 Project.

His love of humanity led him to create the philanthropic association CIRNA (Italian Centre for Advanced Neuroscience Research), which operated in multiple areas. These included promoting the application of research discoveries to everyday practice and creating a lay association (Alleanza Cefalgici) to give voice to and empower headache patients. In his insatiable quest for answers about the interplay between the brain and the mind, Nappi also created a section of CIRNA dedicated to the promotion of activities in the field of neurophilosophy.

He established numerous collaborations, many of which evolved into solid and sincere friendships with researchers from Northern Europe and the United States over time. Notably, he developed a strong bond with Professor Jes Olesen’s Danish group, with whom he collaborated closely on the initial editions of the International Headache Classification — a significant milestone in the field. He also formed close ties with Professor Schoenen’s Belgian group, emphasising the importance of neurophysiology in diagnosing and studying headaches. Additionally, he established strong connections with Professor Moskowitz in Boston, Professor Welch in Detroit, and Professor Appenzeller in Albuquerque.

Giuseppe Nappi lived his life as a journey, one with projects, encounters, alliances, discoveries, power. In doing so, he managed to bring communities together, strengthen them, support shared values, find solutions to problems and advance scientific knowledge. In this sense, he was a true master, and his legacy will endure (Figure 1).

Ithaca (Ιθάκη)

(by Konstantinos P. 'Kavafis)

Keep Ithaca always in your mind.

Arriving there is what you are destined for.

But do not hurry the journey at all.

Better if it lasts for years,

so you are old by the time you reach the island,

wealthy with all you have gained on the way,

not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.





Figure 1. Professor Giuseppe Nappi.

At this link you can watch the interview of Prof. Nappi delivered in 2021 on the occasion of the celebration for the 50th anniversary of the Pavia Headache Centre.

<https://youtu.be/K94I03K1djo?si=jJiJmrbSySqij7of>

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