

Obituary

THE MARIO NEGRI INSTITUTE FOR PHARMACOLOGICAL RESEARCH MOURNS THE
DEATH OF
DR. LUCIANO MORASCA, M.D.
HEAD OF THE ANTITUMORAL PHARMACOLOGY LABORATORY OF THE INSTITUTE

On 20 September 1986, in Milan, Dr. Luciano Morasca, Head of the Mario Negri Institute Antitumoral Pharmacology Laboratory, died of cancer, at the age of 53 years. His whole long scientific career had been dedicated to cancer research.

Born at Pietra Ligure in 1933, Luciano Morasca joined the research group headed by Professor Silvio Garattini at the Milan University Institute of Pharmacology in 1957, as an internal student. He obtained his degree in medicine in 1961, with a thesis prepared in the cell pharmacology laboratory where, under the direction of Professor Alfredo Leonardi, for the first time in Italy human tumor cells were being cultured *in vivo* for research on antitumoral drugs.

After graduating, Dr. Morasca spent a couple of years specializing in cell culture in the United States. He worked in California with two well-known American scientists in that field — Prof. C. M. Pomerat at the Pasadena Foundation for Cancer Research, and Dr. J. Siskin at the Department of Biology of City of Hope Medical Center, Los Angeles.

On his return to Italy in 1963 he was one of the founders of the Mario Negri Institute, where he was appointed Head of the Cancer Pharmacology Laboratory. During his 23 years at the Institute Dr. Morasca pushed through a vast and far-reaching series of research programmes in pharmacology and antitumoral chemotherapy, and the extent of his findings is reflected in a total of 123 articles, published in the major international scientific journals.

Dr. Morasca contributed to the following topics in cancer research: to the development of many original methodological advancements in the use of tissue culture, to the better understanding of mechanisms of action of antitumoral drugs, to the use of cellular biology applied to thrombotic cardiovascular diseases, to the biology of the metastases and their relation to the thrombotic processes, to the determination of chemosensitivity of cancer cells from patients, to better design of clinical trials.

Dr. Morasca also made a significant contribution to the development of some of the antitumoral drugs in current use. Many of his research programmes received financial support from the American National Cancer Institute, the Italian National Research Council (CNR), and the Italian Association for Cancer Research (AIRC).

Dr. Morasca held the post of secretary to the European Tissue Culture Society, and was a member of the European Organisation for Research on Cancer Treatment, the New York Academy of Sciences, the European Association for Cancer Research and the American Tissue Culture Association. Parallel to his research, he found time for a considerable amount of teaching, and over the years a large number of Italian and foreign research workers have specialized in his laboratory.

In 1984, even though he was already seriously ill and fully aware of his fate, Dr. Morasca found courage and energy to organize the 32nd Meeting of the European Tissue Culture Society, at Milan University Department of Biology. This international congress was attended by over 170 scientists from all over the world.

Luciano Morasca dedicated 28 years of his life to research on antitumoral drugs, putting into it all his extensive medical and biological culture. A man of sincere and profound humanity, he always worked with modesty and humility, abstaining from any sign of ostentation. The milestones in his scientific career speak clearly of his olympic lack of interest for making money.

With his life devoted to cancer research, Dr. Morasca was an outstanding example of unflagging enthusiasm and unwaning dedication in a field that concedes scant satisfaction and even scantier results. The efforts and driving spirit of men like him are an essential ingredient of the success we all hope to see in our lifetime.

PROF. SILVIO GARATTINI, Director
PROF. ALFREDO LEONARDI, General Secretary
Milan, 14 October 1986