In Memory of Luigi Amaducci, MD (1932-1998)

Luigi Amaducci, MD, died on January 11 in Florence, Italy, at the age of 66 years. He was an outstanding neurologist and internationally known for his work on Alzheimer disease and his tireless long-term activity in promoting and organizing international research collaborations between neurologists. He was fascinated by the complexity of the brain, and his penetrating mind encompassed many branches of knowledge, including medical sciences, music, and literature.

Professor Amaducci was born in Verona, Italy, in 1932. He earned his medical degree at the University of Padua Medical School (Italy) in 1957. Harvard Medical School in Boston, Mass, granted him a Fulbright fellowship for the years 1960 to 1962 for postdoctoral research in neuropathology, after which he returned to Italy for further training in neurology at the University of Florence. During 1960 to 1970, Dr Amaducci was the principal investigator for two 3-year projects funded by grants from the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke—National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, Md) and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (New York, NY), respectively. In 1978, he worked as a visiting professor in the Department of Neurology and Pathology at Stanford University (Stanford, Calif) and in 1983 to 1984 as a visiting scientist at the NINCDS—National Institutes of Health in the Neuroepidemiology Department. Since 1979, he served as full professor of neurology at the University of Florence Medical School. The University of Florence appointed him chairman of the Department of Neurologic and Psychiatric Science from 1979 to 1983, and again from 1991 to 1994.

Dr Amaducci was an active member of many professional and scientific organizations: he was president of the Italian Society of Neurology, president of the Research Group on Dementias of the World Federation of Neurology, and vice president of the European Federation of Neurological Societies. In 1989, he became director of the Targeted Project on Aging of the Italian National Research Council; he also was the national delegate for the Biomedical and Health Research Program of the European Union Program (1995-1998). Dr Amaducci also served on the editorial boards of several scientific journals and on the International Advisory Committee of the Archives of Neurology.

He has an extensive list of published papers, with several of his works focusing on multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer disease, dementia, and epidemiology. Dr Amaducci began his research studying phospholipid changes in multiple sclerosis in Boston during the early 1960s. Since then, he worked to bridge the gap between basic sciences and clinical neurology. Neurologists know him for his early work on the epidemiology of Alzheimer disease that provided important hereditary evidence for this disorder. This observation prompted him to organize an international group aimed at studying the genetics of familial Alzheimer disease. His foresight and long-term support to this aspect of research, at a time when such ideas were not considered feasible, led to the identification of many families with familial Alzheimer disease. It also led to the collection of DNA samples, which were crucial to the International Familial Alzheimer Disease group’s successful identification of genes causing familial Alzheimer disease. Dr Amaducci organized the first population-based Italian longitudinal study on aging that is still in progress and providing the first accurate estimates of prevalence and incidence rates of chronic conditions in the older Italian population and the physical and mental functional changes associated with age. This large study coordinated by Dr Amaducci showed, among the many results, that education is protective against developing Alzheimer disease. It is indeed quite an irony of fate that a man like Dr Amaducci was not protected by his vast cultural experiences from such a rapid, invasive, and fatal disease.

In addition to being a remarkable researcher and research leader, Dr Amaducci was also a distinguished lecturer and excellent teacher. He was a stimulating speaker, reflective in demeanor and full of creative ideas. His death certainly came too early, leaving many important scientific projects incomplete and leaving in mournful sorrow those of us who had the privilege to know him as a mentor and as a friend. His colleagues and friends acknowledge their gratitude to his wife Maria Pia, their son Giovanni, and daughters Giulia and Bianca for their outstanding support and love to Luigi, which provided the foundation for his ability to concentrate on his many medical and scientific projects.

Sandro Sorbi, MD
Florence, Italy