

In memoriam of Prof. Giuseppe Gerzeli

On January 6, 2018 Giuseppe Gerzeli, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Anatomy at Pavia University, came to the end of his life at eighty-six years.

Giuseppe Gerzeli was born in Milan on April 1, 1931, and graduated *magna cum laude* from the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Pavia in 1954, as student of the Ghislieri College. Under the guidance of Professor Maffo Vialli, he pursued the thesis in the field of histochemistry and began his academic career. From 1954 he served as Assistant at the Institute of Comparative Anatomy; from 1961 he was Professor of Embryology and Experimental Morphology and from 1967 of Comparative Anatomy at the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Pavia.

He spent several periods of study and research in institutions at the international level: Biophysics Unit of King's College in London, Institut d'Histochemie Medicale in Paris and Stazione Zoologica in Naples.

From 1970, when he became Full Professor, Giuseppe Gerzeli has mainly devoted himself in teaching Comparative Anatomy for students of Biological Sciences; under the influence of his mentor Professor Vialli, he begun to coordinate for forty years the research of young graduates, then co-workers also in new fields of interest in obtaining national collaborations and grants.

During his long career, his scientific activity was dedicated to the study of experimental, comparative and pathological

aspects of cell differentiation in various tissues and organs; his approaches were based on qualitative and quantitative histochemical techniques. The main scientific contributions concern: - the biology of nucleus and DNA kinetics, - the distribution and functional role of phenolic and indolic substances that led him to identify the enterochromaffin cells in *Amphioxus*, - the setup of the histochemical reaction for the tetrahydropholic reductase, *i.e.* a key enzyme of cell proliferation and differentiation, - the enzymatic ionic transport applied to the study of liver cell biology, - the haemopoiesis and lymphopoiesis processes. His scientific interest extended to the study of liver cell proliferation and death during Amphibia biological cycles and xenobiotics exposure. The results obtained in these studies led over 380 articles and congress participations published on prestigious journals. His scientific merits led him to receive some awards, including gold medal and first-class diploma of the President of the Republic for merits of Science and Culture (1996). He has been member of several scientific Societies, including the Italian Society of Histochemistry in which he served as President from 1990 to 1993; since 1999 he has been a member of the Istituto Lombardo Accademia di Scienze e Lettere.

His scientific presence due to continuous updating and cultural enrichment was not lacking even in the role that Prof. Gerzeli held as Coordinator of the PhD in Cellular Biology, from 1997 to 2005.

The engagement of Giuseppe Gerzeli in the academic life is highlighted by many involvements: from 1967 to 1982 Director of the Comparative Anatomy Institute; from



1973 to 1975 first Coordinator of the Biological Sciences Council; from 1997 to 2000 Director of the Animal Biology Department. He was Dean of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Pavia for five consecutive terms (for fifteen years), when deep and complex, structural and management transformations occurred. Finally, he held the longest position of President of UNITRE Pavia (2002-2014).

Prof. Gerzeli has been a fundamental point of reference for his balance, dedication and availability for the University and Faculty colleagues as well as friendly mentor for his co-workers.

I have good memories of him and his advices, and I want to express my sincere gratitude for having always perceived in our conversations simplicity and encouragement, curiosity and cultural richness.

Sergio Barni
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