

Antonios Valavanis Medal of Honor awarded to Professor Luc Picard

Laudatio by Professor Luc Picard to honor the personality and achievements of Professor Anton Valavanis at the occasion of the ceremony to award the first Antonios Valavanis Medal of Honour, held at the 4th Congress of the Swiss Federation of Clinical Neuro-Societies (SFCNS) on the 25th of October 2019 in Lausanne.

Dear Professor Gralla, President of the Swiss Society of Neuroradiology,

Dear Professors Kirsch, Lövblad and Remonda, Members of the Neuroscientific Curatorium in charge of the award of the Medal of Honor Antonios Valavanis,

Dear Anton and Susanne,

Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank very much the Neuroscience Jury who granted me this immense honor. I am sure that in this room no one can imagine how deeply this distinction has moved me. I know Anton since more than thirty years and during this long period we gradually discovered that we had identical views concerning the multiple scientific but also political and ethical problems about the development of diagnostic and interventional neuroradiology. This explains why our spontaneous initial attraction has gradually been transformed into a deep friendship and then into a real affection. In a few minutes, it is absolutely impossible to recall the immense work done by Anton, I will only try to make you understand why I respect, admire and love Anton so deeply.

Why is Anton Valavanis really an exceptional Human Being? I will confine myself to mentioning four aspects of his personality, which best expresses his intellectual wealth.

1. Scientifically speaking, Anton knows the brain better than anyone else does. This is due to his immense anatomical, embryological and clinical knowledge, accumulated thanks to his daily hard work. Anton is a tireless researcher whose reflections have been enriched by his wonderful collaboration with Professor Gazi Yasargil on the neurosurgical plane and Professor Ugo Fisch on the ENT and skull base plane.

With his colleagues of high level and international reputation, Anton has formed a neuroscientific research team absolutely unique in the world. This trio has undoubtedly made neurosciences progress, because in addition to their heavy daily activity dedicated to their patients, they have constantly shared their progress with the whole world through ongoing conferences, publications, tireless courses and beautiful books that serve as references to all the specialists of the nervous system.

2. Based on these qualities of researcher, Anton is an extraordinary teacher. Passionate about the need to train his many fellows and the need to share his knowledge, he has personally organized and contributed to numerous courses and lectures delivered around the world.

All his lectures are extensively thought, regularly deepened, worked and reworked. His speech is wonderfully clear and his didactic qualities are recognized by each of us. Above everything, his demonstrations and conclusions are always perfectly honest. I have never seen Anton embellish any statistical results of his scientific activity. The quality of his results don't surprise anyone because all those who worked with him or who simply saw his work, know the quality and precision of his therapeutic activity, led by therapeutic indications that are always carefully balanced, initially discussed with his neurological and neurosurgical colleagues before being carefully explained to the patient and his family. To all these qualities one has to add a great technical skill. To my knowledge, he is the only one in the world to master his gestures with such a precision that allows him to perform a simultaneous glue injection into an arteriovenous malformation, each of his hands being able to inject at a different speed.

Anton has organized for many years what has become the worldwide known Zurich Course on Interventional Neuroradiology that participants attended to specifically listen to him and gain knowledge from his dedicated lectures. This course was without any doubt considered to represent an important training in our specialty, and was one of the milestones of the education pathways in interventional neuroradiology together with the Master Degree in Neurovascular Sciences organized in Thailand by our common friend late Professor Pierre Lasjaunias; and myself as organizer of the ABC Win meeting in France.

Each of us having responsibilities in different national, European or international scientific societies as well as in the World Federations, we constantly put our heads together in order to try to improve what we believed in: the quality of teaching, what we considered the best way to worldwide share knowledge and to unify its content. This has allowed to reinforce our friendship and to let it become strong and unwavery.

3. To achieve these goals, Anton has developed and continues to develop an extraordinary organizational policy of Neurosciences. In 1989 he was the youngest of the four founding members of the Swiss Society of Neuroradiology with Peter Huber, Ernst Wilhelm Radue and Othmar Schubiger, and that actively integrated the European Society of Neuroradiology, the World Federation of Therapeutic and Interventional Neuroradiology and the World Federation of Neuroradiological Societies. Thanks to him, Switzerland was the first country to succeed to create the Swiss Federation of Clinical Neuro-Societies, of which he was one of the three founding members in 2009. Anton currently leads the Clinical Neuroscience Center of the University Hospital Zurich.

This common passion for a new organization of neurosciences bringing together all the specialists concerned by the nervous system is certainly one of the elements that has contributed the most to bring us closer. We also owe this to Anton's energy, will and dedication.

We are both convinced that given the speed of the current evolution, all future specialists of the nervous system should benefit from a common training base facilitating the open-mindedness necessary for further multidisciplinary collaboration.

4. Ethics is finally also a fundamental element that always brought us together. The bases of ethics that consist in determining the best or the least worse answer to a given question have unfortunately never allowed us to place active Ethics Committees within

our World Federations, but we have succeeded to introduce Ethics in almost all our recommendations.

Anton is fully aware of the importance of this parameter especially as all neuroscience specialists will be confronted with the problems created by the development of the increased human and artificial intelligence.

Anton is finally a very courageous man, brave in his political and scientific opinions. He is not afraid to go against accepted ideas based on solid personal arguments. The continuous development of his classification of vascular malformations of the brain in Histogenetic Units will certainly completely modify our ancient concepts concerning the natural history of brain AVMs because their natural history is certainly different according to their neurogenetic localization.

All these many qualities regrouped into his strong and unique personality, gathering will and stoicism, energy and sacrifices, have made Zurich become a flagship in Interventional Neuroradiology. All of us, confirmed interventionalists or young trainees, look at his department as a reference center in our specialty, and we have to thank Anton for all what he has given us, brought us, shared with us.

There is still much to say but due to the limited time, I would like to end this too short tribute by asking each of you to rise for a standing ovation in honor of Anton Valavanis.

Thank you