



Obituary

In memoriam: Paolo Pinelli, MD (1921–2015)



The news of the death of Paolo Pinelli, on Christmas Eve 2015, prompted feelings of great sadness, not just in those who have accompanied him in the course of his long career, but in the entire Italian neurological community.

A wonderful man, neurologist and researcher: Paolo Pinelli was all these things and it is not easy to say which description fits him best, as he managed to combine all these attributes. But neurology was certainly not his only interest; indeed, it was always a delight to engage, with him, in discussions of music, art, literature and philosophy.

Born in Mantua in 1921, Pinelli joined the Medical Faculty of the University of Pavia as a student of the historic Collegio Ghislieri. These were years that left an indelible mark on the young Pinelli, as we learn from *De Germanis. 1939–1945: libertà e ideali nel Collegio Ghislieri*, one of the many books he wrote following his retirement. During the war he was sent as a medical sergeant to Croatia, where he earned a star (on his epaulette) for the work he did at field hospital n. 51.

He developed a passionate interest in neurology and psychiatry, which took him to the Pavia University Neurologic Clinic, then directed by Prof. Berlucchi. After gaining his specialisation, he left for Copenhagen to become a researcher in the Laboratory of Neurophysiology run by Prof. Buchthal. Thus began his collaboration with Buchthal which, during two periods spent in

Copenhagen (1948–1949 and 1953–1957), allowed him to make fundamental scientific contributions to the study of neuromuscular diseases, and to contribute to the emergence of electromyography. This was also the period of his marriage to Marisa Lanzoni, who was to follow him and support him throughout his long career.

In 1950 he became Berlucchi's assistant at the Institute of Neurology at the University of Pavia, where he was subsequently appointed lecturer until 1964. In 1961 he organised, in Pavia, the 1st International Congress of Electromyography, an event that saw the creation of the "Pavia Committee on EMG Apparatus" (Buchthal, Desmedt, Drechsler, Gilliatt, Hausmanova-Petrusewicz, Isch, Kugelberg, Lambert, Lefebvre, Liberson, Pinelli, Simpson, Struppler, Toshihiko Tokizane).

He spent the years from 1965 (he became a full professor in 1966) to 1972 in Rome, where he directed the Neuropsychiatry Clinic at the Catholic University. His studies on the effects of cortisone treatment in myasthenia gravis, conducted with his closest collaborators, date back to this period.

In 1972 he returned to Pavia as Director of the University's Clinic of Neurology, and was instrumental in getting the C. Mondino Neurological Institute officially recognised as a Scientific Institute for Research, Hospitalisation and Healthcare by the Italian Health Ministry (1973). He continued to study myasthenia gravis and the effects of thymectomy, but was already developing new interests, becoming particularly drawn to neurological rehabilitation. Indeed, he was a pioneer in this field, and Pavia, in 1976, provided the venue for the 3rd Congress of the International Society of Electrophysiology and Kinesiology (ISEK). Pinelli always acted as a stimulus to his closest collaborators, encouraging them to work to raise the profile of the technical and medical roles related to clinical neurophysiology.

His appointment as Director of the 1st Neurological Clinic of the University of Milan in 1980 meant that he did not play a direct part, even if he strongly supported the project, in the creation, in Pavia, of the University School of Clinical Neurophysiology Technicians (in 1981) and the Postgraduate School of Clinical Neurophysiology (in 1982). In Milan his research in the field of neurological rehabilitation continued, also thanks to his role, as a consultant, at the Laboratory of Neurophysiology and Bioengineering at the S. Maugeri Foundation – Scientific Institute in Veruno. However, as his interest in physiology and pathology of the peripheral nervous system declined, his publications in the field of psychophysiology and psychopathology increased. He continued to pursue this line of research even after his retirement (1996), spending time at the laboratory in Veruno where, still displaying a youthful enthusiasm for research, he developed a new approach

to the psychophysiological analysis of brain function (a method called multiple delayed reaction verbochronometry).

Paolo Pinelli received important recognition and many accolades in the course of his long career: President of the Italian Society of Neurology (1972–1974), member of the Biology and Medicine Committee of the Italian National Research Council (CNR), Vice President of the World Federation of Neurology, honorary member of the British, Spanish and Polish Neurology Societies.

In 1999, the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Milan applied to the Italian Universities Ministry to have Paolo Pinelli named Professor Emeritus. This honour was conferred on him in 2000.

Following the death of his lifetime's companion, Pinelli embarked on the production (between 2003 and 2014) of a rich collection of short stories that, using contemporary man as a bridge

between the natural sciences and metaphysics, dealt with important topics such as love and death.

During Paolo Pinelli's long and "insatiable" life, many of his collaborators and pupils at the various universities in which he worked (Rome, Pavia, Milan) went on to become tenured professors, providing an indication of the quality of the "seeds" sown by this great teacher and scholar.

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