



## IN MEMORIAM

# In memoriam Maurizio Vignola

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**T**o put it mildly, this has been a difficult task and we would clearly have preferred not to have to write the following lines.

Sometimes, and we think we all have experiences like this, there are individuals in our lives who you cannot help but recognise. This occurs in school, at university and in your professional life. Maurizio was one of those people; a very motivated, sympathetic individual, who only seemed to have friends. This is why it is so sad and unjust that someone like him had to go, and why we, as colleagues, friends, editors and as a scientific community, are speechless. We, as editors, feel that it is appropriate to remember some of the important aspects of Maurizio's attitude and career.

Maurizio Vignola was born in 1964 in Palermo (Italy), he was educated at the University of Palermo, under his mentor Professor G. Bonsignore, and later became Professor of Respiratory Diseases, also in Palermo. A swift and solid career! In the early 1990s he spent two very fruitful years in Montpellier with Pascal Chanez, Francois-Bernard Michel, Philippe Godard and Jean Bousquet, and he completed, in 1998, a European PhD thesis on "Inflammation et remodelage de l'épithélium dans l'asthme".

During the period from 1993 to 1998, Maurizio developed his career and became a grant holder for several European community projects. He spent time as a research fellow with Steve Rennard in Omaha (USA), where he focused his interests on the mechanisms of severe asthma and COPD. After the completion of his thesis, Maurizio became more and more involved in large clinical trials. At this time he did not hesitate to take up positions of responsibility within the international scientific community by serving on global committees, such as GINA and ARIA, and various Task Forces of the European Respiratory Society. He cleverly combined basic research with clinical trials, and his publication list, consisting of >100 peer-reviewed publications, clearly underlines the broadness of his interest.

Maurizio has been a member of almost every respiratory society of relevance and he was frequently invited as a speaker to many events, something he liked and something he was extremely good at. His scientific accuracy, communication

skills, interest in colleagues and gentle attitude also made him a superb editor of journals, the *European Respiratory Journal* in particular. Here he helped to develop his colleagues', as well as his own, ideas concerning the biology of inflammation, particularly with regards to tissue (re)modelling. In addition, he has always been attracted by the relationship between the inflammatory response in the upper and the lower airways, and ways to measure these features in science and (tomorrow's) clinical practice.

Talents like Maurizio's are very rare. But what was even more exceptional was the optimal balance he achieved between his professional attitude and his human approach, between his creative spirit and his willingness to take on responsibility, between his capacity to work hard and his calm temperament, and between his achievements and his modesty. We consider ourselves not only his editor colleagues, but also his friends, because we spent a lot of time with him in a professional, but also a social setting.

With Maurizio, we are losing one of the brightest minds and strongest personalities of his young generation in respiratory medicine and we are simply very sad about this. Our thoughts are with his family, particularly his wife and his children. We will always remember Maurizio Vignola, primarily as a very fine individual who also happened to be an excellent scientist.



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