

In Memoriam Prof. Italo de Vincentiis (1926-2016)

Professor Italo de Vincentiis passed away on the morning of Sunday, December 11, 2016, a few days before his 90th birthday. His death marks the passing of one of the most charismatic figures in ENT in Italy in recent decades, and a master of science and life who greatly enriched those who had the good fortune to be close to him, even for a short time, during his long academic career. As an original and precise researcher, he always perfectly combined scientific activity, broad and diversified in all subspecialties, with excellent teaching capabilities and outstanding clinical and surgical skills, and certainly personified the ideal university professor.

Born in Campo di Giove in Aquila on 15 December, 1926, he received his medical degree from the University of Rome in 1951, and finished his specialisation in ENT in 1954. From 1953 to 1962, he was at the ENT clinic at the University of Perugia under the direction of Prof. Domenico Filipo, and during that time distinguished his scientific, educational and surgical abilities and earned the profound esteem of both colleagues and faculty.

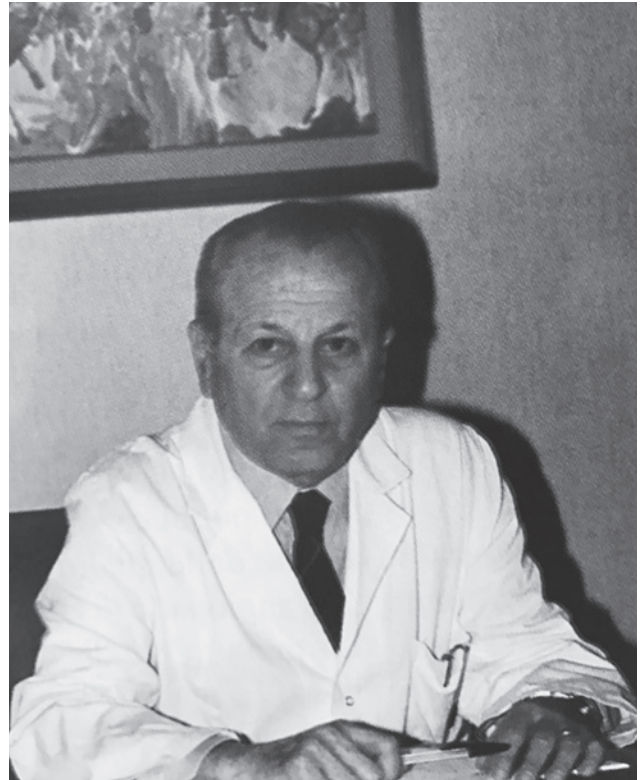
In 1962, when Prof. Filipo moved to Rome, the university wanted to promote him to department head. However, this never happened since Prof. Filipo wanted him by his side in Rome. In 1969, following the division of the Chair of Otolaryngology at the University “La Sapienza”, Prof. de Vincentiis became the co-head of ENT and in 1970 was appointed full professor.

Italo de Vincentiis was author of a large number of presentations at national congresses and published many studies in national and international journals. One of his main areas of interest was artificial larynxes, which was preceded by studies on vocal organ reconstruction in animals and humans. He also worked intensely on the pathogenesis and diagnosis of Meniere’s disease, which in 1964 led to the discovery of osmotic therapy and the role that glycerol has in this labyrinthopathy. He also contributed many studies on cochlear and retrocochlear hearing loss and cranio-facial pain.

Professor Italo de Vincentiis stood out by advancing the ENT field in Italy, by opposing indiscriminate tonsillectomy and by promoting more ‘major’ ENT surgery. In 1971, he was one of the founders of the AUORL, and became its president soon thereafter; in 1980, he established a department for maxillofacial surgery; in 1986, he was president of the SIO, and in the same year contributed to the foundation of the EUFOS in Paris; for about two decades he was director of the journal ‘Il Valsalva’; he was coordinator of a national working group on labyrinthopathies for the Italian National Research Council; he was a longstanding member of the Italian National Health Council and a staunch supporter of the need for the SIO to acquire a permanent seat in Rome (currently in via Pigorini).

His human qualities are no less important: a pragmatic man, with a broad intellectual culture, and exceptional in many ways, which was perfectly described in two autobiographical texts, “Il ragazzo della valle” and “I paralipomeni al ragazzo della valle” [“The Valley Boy” and “Chronicles of the Valley Boy”], recollecting his adolescence and youth as part of the social world at his birthplace, Campo di Giove, and recalling a simple pastoral life of rare beauty. Being in love with his birthplace and the nearby mountains, Italo de Vincentiis was also a protagonist, during the German occupation of the Second World War, of acts of heroism by rescuing, near Campo di Giove, many young Italians, Jews and military allies. In an open letter dated 22 February, 2012 to the Mayor of Campo di Giove in which he requested official recognition for the town considering what his fellowmen did in 1943-44, he concluded by writing that “I have reached my last mile, the finish is still far away, but it will come”.

The finish for the “Valley Boy” came on Sunday, December 11, 2016, but we students, and many of those who knew him, will never forget.



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