



## IN MEMORIAM

# Prof. Philippe Godard, 1948–2011

M. Gaga\*, G. Joos# and P. Chanez<sup>†</sup> on behalf of the European Respiratory Society Steering Committee<sup>+</sup>

**W**e were deeply saddened by the death of Philippe Godard, a passionate physician, educator and mentor, a dedicated family man, and a loyal and beloved friend. Philippe was a dedicated and active European Respiratory Society (ERS) member who served as ERS Assembly Secretary, a member of the ERS Executive Committee and Chair of the ERS School consecutively from 1994 to 2000.

Philippe Godard's career shows a constant professional dedication to his role as physician, teacher and researcher. After his medical diploma, and under the guidance of his mentor Prof. François B. Michel, he trained in France and Canada and specialised in pulmonary medicine, obtaining both the specialty certification and his medical doctorate in 1978. He then worked at the Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier (France), first at Aiguelongue, then at Arnaud de Villeneuve Hospitals and at INSERM (the French research centres). He also worked briefly in the USA, at Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), with Frank Austin. As Philippe used to say himself, his years of professional activity were intense, exciting and rewarding. His keywords were education, research and care.

Philippe loved his job as a clinician, as it embodied a social dimension that has largely developed into "community work" at a national and international level. His vocation to serve the patients first was always very striking; he wanted to help them find relief, and quickly. In his practice, he wanted an approach that would quickly give comfort and quality of life to his patients. And he performed thousands of patient consultations per year. His interests covered the whole spectrum of pulmonary medicine, from asthma, allergy and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to lung cancer care and interstitial lung diseases.

During his stay in Canada, he discovered a new and innovative approach to medical teaching, and he loved to share his interest and promote pulmonary medicine to the young, whether it was to the youngest graduate or to a post-doctoral fellow. As an educator, he was involved in training residents and in the formation of the pulmonary medicine curriculum in France. But Philippe was not only involved in education at a university level or even at a country level; through his involvement with the ERS and the Société de Pneumologie de Langue Française (SPLF) he helped in the education and professional development of

doctors around the world. This included educational activities in Africa, South America, China, Japan and, of course, many European countries. Although he was classically trained as a doctor and pulmonologist, Philippe recognised the benefits and the limitations of conventional teaching methods. Thus, he used newly available information and communication methods to make learning more engaging and rigorous. He saw himself as a trafficker of information, "a pedagogue, a slave accompanying the child to school." In the 1990s, he developed an interactive teaching method based on real clinical situations. He developed an expert system in asthma; this was his "baby" and was one of his many pioneering contributions to education and clinical research. The concepts of control and asthma severity, which form the basis of current recommendations, are derived, at least in part, from his thinking and his passion to better understand this disease. He wanted to understand the medical reasoning, which he referred to as the "black box". In this context, he became interested in evidence-based medicine and he tried to measure the challenges and limitations in his hospital's practice. He supported the actions of and empathised with the younger generation, sometimes asking "naïve" questions to help push them to become engaged and committed. At the ERS, he



FIGURE 1. Philippe Godard, 1948–2011.

\*7th Respiratory Medicine Dept, Athens Chest Hospital, Athens, Greece. #Respiratory Diseases, Ghent University Hospital, Ghent, Belgium. <sup>†</sup>Dept of Respiratory Diseases, U600 INSERM, Aix Marseille University, Marseille, France. <sup>+</sup>A list of the members of the European Respiratory Society Steering Committee can be found in the Acknowledgements section.

CORRESPONDENCE: M. Gaga: 7th Respiratory Medicine Dept, Athens Chest Hospital, 152 Mesogion Ave, Athens 11527, Athens, Greece. E-mail: minagaga@yahoo.com

contributed to the formation of the ERS School, which has since become one of the best training tools in pneumonology in the world. Philippe used and developed all the resources of the teacher: from bedside and conventional teaching of respiratory medicine, to web-based learning. The ultimate goal was to serve the patient.

Philippe was passionate about clinical research; he was interested in translational research and wanted to develop a close link between "bench" and "bedside" science. After completing his medical thesis, which was experimental and innovative, he worked at INSERM U58 (Montpellier) with Dr Marcelle Darmon, and was published extensively. He wanted to see the lungs, cells and mediators in order to better understand and treat lung diseases. He liked the concept of biomarkers as a means of quantifying and understanding disease. He worked first with arachidonic acid derivatives. More recently, taking advantage of the advent of "omics", he entered the field of proteomics. All his research was performed with the aim of achieving better understanding, education and treatment.

Philippe Godard was a devoted husband, a father of five and a grandfather of three. His wife Florence and his family were both a heaven and an inspiration to him.

Philippe was diagnosed with cancer which progressed while he was serving his term as President of the SPLF. Despite the

progression of his cancer, he remained passionate and curious about recent developments in respiratory medicine, about students and research, and he was able to initiate a research project involving the young. Although he knew the prognosis, he was serene and courageous, and was aided by his faith. Surrounded by his wife, his family and his friends, he died on July 31, 2011, at the age of 63.

He was an honest man, a doctor of the 21st century, who had a passion for life, which as he said, is beautiful and full of surprises. We'd like his family to know that we understand their loss, it is our loss too. The ERS and the whole respiratory community will miss him.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the European Respiratory Society Steering Committee, their titles and affiliation details are as follows. M. Decramer (Past President), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium. K.F. Rabe (President), University of Kiel, Kiel and Grosshansdorf Hospital, Kiel, Germany. F. Blasi (President-Elect), University of Milan, Milan, Italy. P.J. Barnes (Vice President), Imperial College London, London, UK. A.K. Simonds (School Chair), Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK. L.P. Nicod (Scientific Committee Chair), Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois, Lausanne, Switzerland. Y. Sibille (Secretary for EU Affairs), Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. M. Gaga is the Secretary General and G. Joos is the Treasurer of the European Respiratory Society.