



## In memoriam Christian Guilleminault (1938–2019)

Nikolaus Netzer<sup>1,2</sup> · Riccardo Stoohs<sup>3</sup>

Received: 18 July 2019 / Revised: 18 July 2019 / Accepted: 18 July 2019 / Published online: 5 August 2019  
© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019



Christian Guilleminault at 'Cardiocirculatory Function during Sleep', 31st August–2nd September 1994, Marburg, Germany

With sadness, on Tuesday the 9th of July 2019, our dear friend and mentor Christian Guilleminault passed away.

**Riccardo**—I met Christian in 1986 while he was a guest professor at the University of Marburg. We were extremely excited and wanted to make his stay at our institution as comfortable as possible. All of the work we were doing was centered around the scientific research Christian had published. All the junior members of our department were just beginning their careers in Sleep Medicine while Christian was at his

peak. He inspired us to pursue a life's work in caring for people with sleep disorders.

In 1988, I had the opportunity to work with Christian's team at Stanford University with the additional honor of working with another pioneer of Sleep Medicine, William Dement. In the years to come, my life changed profoundly through this experience of exchange. Every aspect of this transformation was driven by the people I was around. I am very grateful for this experience and use it every day in my clinical work to the benefit of individuals with sleep disorders.

When I think of Christian, I remember the loving and caring person that he has always been. When I arrived at Stanford, he made me feel like a member of his family. I was welcomed to meet his wife Priscilla and sons Eric and Damian.

Christian never forgot his roots and his love for France. Somehow, I always had the impression that all the great work he did he would have rather done in France.

He was a true Frenchman and free thinker, liberal in a truly humanistic sense. I will remember him as such and will miss him dearly.

**Niki**—There can be some solace in the loss of a friend if that friend passed away with his brain as sharp as it was 40 years earlier, having lived a full life, and having had the chance for personal goodbyes.

Poignantly, I recall hours spent with Christian at the kitchen table, some of the most fruitful in my scientific and personal life. Christian gave help freely to others and was trusting, with appropriate self-esteem due to his many achievements in science and in life. Christian's open heart allowed him to be a great bridge-builder in the field of Sleep Medicine. Christian's colleagues have stated that hundreds of scholars in Sleep Medicine around the world are offspring of Christian's teaching and serve as ambassadors for his sleep research. If one could diagram a family tree of sleep research and sleep medicine, the branches from Kleitman, Dement, and Guilleminault would show an enormous number of connections. This was possible because Christian was able to think outside of the box, first the Paris box and later the Stanford box. Early on, Christian recognized the potential of sleep

✉ Nikolaus Netzer  
nikolaus.netzer@uibk.ac.at

<sup>1</sup> Hermann Buhl Institute for Hypoxia and Sleep Medicine Research, University Innsbruck, Bad Aibling, Germany

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Mountain Emergency Medicine, Eurac Research, Bolzano, Italy

<sup>3</sup> Dortmund, Germany

research communities in South America, China, and other Asian countries. He accurately foresaw that researchers in these developing countries would soon play a major role in sleep research despite language and cultural barriers.

Christian maintained an open attitude to all fields of medicine beyond his own starting point in neurology. First, pneumology and otolaryngology, then dentistry, pediatrics, and gynecology. Among Christian's 744 publications, listed in Pubmed are many frequently cited papers outside the usual realms of neurology, pulmonology, and sleep medicine. Christian's ability to think outside the box lead to a very important attribution. Christian knew that he was not the first to describe obstructive sleep apnea as an entity. This honor belonged to Jung and Kuhlo (1), who did not know exactly how to classify their findings and thought it must be a form of the Pickwickian Syndrome. It was Christian who recognized obstructive sleep apnea and gave it a name (2).

From the time of its origins, Christian Guilleminault and Bill Dement supported this Journal, *Sleep and*

*Breathing*, as contributing authors and members of the editorial board. Later, Christian became a highly active Associate Editor for the Journal. His contributions to discussions in editorial board sessions were always innovative and constructive.

We lose a friend but we have comfort in the knowledge that he will never be forgotten.

A bientot Christian!

## References

1. Jung R, Kuhlo W (1965) Neurophysiological studies of abnormal night sleep and the Pickwickian syndrome. *Prog Brain Res* 18:140–159
2. Guilleminault C, Eldridge FL, Dement WC (1973) Insomnia with sleep apnea: a new syndrome. *Science* 181(4102):856–858

**Publisher's note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.