



In Memoriam

VALERIO NOBILI



The unexpected news of the sudden death of Valerio Nobili, Section Editor of *Digestive and Liver Disease*, on Friday, March 15, rapidly spread across the scientific community, leaving all of us astonished and incredulous.

Born April 10th, 1966 Valerio was at the top of his scientific career, which was mostly spent in pediatric Hepatology and Metabolism. At a relatively young age compared to Italian standards, he was close to reaching even more eminent positions within the Italian academy.

He had (though I would like to say he is . . .) a hearty and boisterous character, full of Italian enthusiasm, with solid roots in Monterotondo (a small town close to Rome, of the same historical age) and a brilliant capacity to discover the scientific novelty and transfer it from the vial in the laboratory to the very young patients' bedside.

To give an example of a day in the life of Valerio, I will try describe his working day, on a day like March 19th, 2019, based on the personal witness of his closest colleagues and friends.

Imagine that it is a wonderful spring day in Rome. Valerio wakes up early, like every day. He quickly checks the emails he received during the night and he responds to the most important ones; he was always quite friendly, even to negative reviewers. He drives by car to Monterotondo, waves and says hello to relatives and friends he meets along the way. He stops for coffee, chitchats about sports and politics, flips through the newspaper and picks up some pastries for post-docs and students in Rome. Upon arrival at 9 am at Bambino Gesù Hospital at the Hepato-metabolic Unit (where he was Chair), he first briefs his team (offering them fresh pastries), then visits patients and outpatients, and maybe tells a joke or two to warm the spirits of any sad or worried child. "Why are you crying? You are right, Roma (soccer team) lost again last night, *mannaggia!*" With children switching from crying to a sudden smile and their parents pleased, indeed, for their child's great and friendly doctor.

In late morning, he goes back to work on the results of research and articles, checks new drafts and revisions. A brief interval for lunch (if any), after which he works on the budget at the faculty administration and goes on a second round for the most serious cases in the department. Then, he dedicates some time to telephone and Skype calls with Italian and international friends and colleagues, exchanging a few words and demonstrating his prompt capacity to focus on solving problems at work.

In the late afternoon, he leaves his daily work for the open air and enjoys the first warm *Ponentino* wind, either jogging and/or cycling, or plays a tennis game at the mythical Aniene sports club. After sports, it's happy hour (and maybe dinner at a fish restaurant, afterwards) while enjoying the beautiful sunset of Rome, with his lovely wife Simona (who also works in the first line, in a different field!). Finally, early to bed, since he has an early flight the next morning for Helsinki, to attend a two-day meeting. It is still cold there. . .

I can see him, but he is no longer there, unfortunately. His unique capability to communicate with friends and colleagues - by eliminating any barrier between the two categories - will remain in our memories. We are thankful for having the opportunity to have known him, even if we have lost him too early.

For those who would like to know more about his honors and achievements, a search on Google and Explore will help find his distinguished resume and a Medline search will list the papers he co-authored, some of which in close collaboration with myself. Even in this issue of *Digestive and Liver Disease*, you may likely find contributions from him and his group.

Most recently, we were exploring the possibility of disentangling single genetic, environmental and social factors in the determination of disease through the life course. In Valerio's opinion, this could have been a new area of study and research within a globalized world.

Ciao, Vale! This is a friendly diminutive for the name Valerio, however in the ancient language of Rome - the Latin language - *vale* stands for *farewell, for ever*.

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