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In memoriam Homage

Philippe Blot (1938-2019)



In 1985, having recently become a resident in Paris, I decided to specialize in Obstetrics and Gynecology. I asked a more experienced friend which department would offer me the best training. Without hesitating he told me to go to the Baudelocque hospital where I would meet Professor Blot, the best Obstetrician in France.

And that was it.

Professor Philippe Blot left us in the night of the 12th to the 13th of August 2019.

All his students were marked for life by this remarkable man.

¹ Centre International de Recherches Médicales de Franceville (Franceville International Medical Research center), one of the centers run by the publicly funded French research and development institute and headquartered in Franceville, Gabon.

As a non-commissioned officer in a paratrooper unit, he participated in the Suez and North-African campaigns. A serious accident put an end to this period of his life, from which he kept a strong sense of duty and an unflinching drive. He started medical school while working as a delivery man for Calberson. His atypical profile and imposing personality appealed to the department heads at the time while also earning him the respect of the Pediatric community, as he was one of the first Pediatric Intensive Care residents under Professor Huault at the Saint Vincent de Paul hospital.

During his clinical fellowship under Professor Sureau at Baudelocque he was on duty three nights out of four at the Port Royal, St Vincent de Paul, and Bondy hospitals. He was universally respected for his experience, self-assurance, and calm.

In 1980, he went to Gabon on a French peace corps contract to head the CIRMF¹ medical research center and the maternity department of the Franceville hospital in the central part of the country. He later taught Obstetrics and Gynecology in the capital Libreville. He returned to Paris with a full professorship and was appointed head of the Baudelocque Midwifery school. In 1988, he was appointed department head at the Robert-Debré Pediatric hospital, which in his hands became the leader of the Parisian Obstetrics community.

At the Obstetrics staff meeting that he led every day at 8:00 am he made an indelible impression on his students both by his poised and sensible arguments and by his maxims, which soon became famous: "Anxiety stimulates but angst paralyzes and impairs the logical functions . . .".

The Medicine he taught was replete with empathy and personalization, at the opposite pole from population medicine and blind submission to protocols. "Protocols work for mice, and women are not mice."

He taught Obstetrics as an art. The foundation was a vast corpus of theoretical knowledge and constant attention to safety. He was an artist in his field. Watching him perform an obstetrical maneuver or forceps extraction was a joy for all his students.

Professor Blot was a man with a vision, who changed the concepts and practices of perinatal medicine within a few months of his arrival at the Robert Debré hospital. He very quickly understood that a dialogue between Neonatologists and Obstetricians was crucial, and one of his innovations was the creation of multidisciplinary meetings on antenatal diagnosis.

Professor Blot was valued by his staff and all those working at the hospital for the relevance of his studies, the quality of his mentoring work with young physicians, and his progressive stances. He maintained close relationships with all his collaborators, irrespective of their job title. He was highly respected by all due to his extraordinary humanity, his knowledge of obstetrical

mechanics, his integrity, and his empathetic but also unfailingly honest discussions with his patients.

Professor Blot was president of the Parisian College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and sat on the executive medical committee of the Paris teaching hospital network *Assistance Publique des Hôpitaux de Paris (AP-HP)* for 12 years. In these positions, he fully accomplished all the missions given to him, in line with his military ethics. He consistently defended his specialty, and many of its members owe him a debt of gratitude for his support.

He received the French Legion of Honor knighthood and was passionately attached to sub-Saharan Africa, which he learned to know well during the many missions he carried out there with Professors Debré and Cugnenc.

He left his post at the Robert Debré hospital in 2003 to return, with no regrets, to Franceville as the administrative director of the research center that he had restored. He supported numerous renowned international groups that were working on the HIV and Ebola virus, and he never hesitated to travel to endemic areas.

In 2007, he finally retired to join his wife in Nice, where he led a quieter life. He relished drawing on his vast store of memories to tell stories, each funnier than the previous one, during our endless discussions that mingled medicine, interpersonal relationships, Africa, politics, philosophy, biology, and even astrophysics, fractal theory, and much else.

This visionary man and extra-ordinary Obstetrician was one of the founders of Perinatology.

His students will never forget the teacher, the delivery room mentor, or the probity, integrity, determination, and charm that were his.

He leaves us with the memory of an exceptional and demanding physician who was passionately involved in innovation and fully at the service of mothers, fathers, and children. He was a man who stood up for his principles and an outstanding colleague.

Ite missa est! as he would say at the end of each staff meeting.
Thank you for everything Mr. Blot.

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