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In memoriam

Christian Delloye (1952–2019)



Christian Delloye, professor at the Louvain Catholic University (UCL) in Belgium and former department head at the UCL Saint-Luc University Hospital left us on 17 March 2019, aged 67, after a long illness.

Christian Delloye developed a keen interest in medicine and grafting very early in his career, after being deeply impressed by the pioneering work of Christiaan Barnard in heart transplantation. He earned his medical doctorate at the Louvain University then chose orthopaedic and trauma surgery as his field by becoming a resident in the department headed by Professor Jean Lewalle, in Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve. There, his scientific rigor no doubt led him to seek Jean Lewalle's critical scrutiny of his investigations into the role played by the blood supply and bone marrow in fracture healing, which were published in the *Revue de Chirurgie Orthopédique* in 1965. When he returned to the university, he partnered with Léopold Coutelier to conduct research into fracture healing and, more specifically, the formation of new bone via chondrogenesis.

He ended his period of education with a fellowship programme at the McGill University in Montreal.

Professor André Vincent, who was then head of department at the Saint-Luc University Hospital, welcomed Christian Delloye in his team, charging him with ensuring the availability of bone grafts to allow the development of reconstructive surgery for patients with tumours.

Christian Delloye followed a meticulous scientific approach to assemble all the components needed to the delivery of bone allografts. He founded the first bone bank in 1983. He had to work from

scratch, from the development of delipidation techniques to the optimisation of conservation and storage. Together with Bernard Loty, he kept an eagle eye on the application of stringent quality standards. He steered the tissue bank into the 21st century by developing a cell and tissue therapy unit in a controlled environment.

He adopted the viewpoint of Professor Pierre Lacroix, the first chair of orthopaedics and traumatology at UCL, who felt that bone allografts were tethered to their clinical history and would be used far more widely if they were better understood. His research therefore centred on characterising the properties of bone allografts and on exploring the ability of bone tissue to fill critical defects. In 1990, he defended a PhD on this topic. Throughout his career, he supported a wealth of research projects on bone grafts, seeking to identify and prevent their weaknesses. He inspired and supervised many investigations and several doctoral theses in this field.

His clinical work concentrated on tumour surgery, which he developed, together with Professor Pierre De Nayer, by applying the techniques created in his laboratory to the treatment of critical tissue defects. His innovative mind placed him at the vanguard of our specialty, where he continually evolved new techniques. He was extremely attentive, painstakingly planned these complex surgical procedures, and was eminently receptive to his patients, who held him in high esteem.

When he succeeded Professor Jean-Jacques Rombouts, he became chair of the orthopaedics and traumatology department where, starting in 2003, he was responsible for training the residents. He headed the orthopaedics and trauma surgery department from 2003 to 2013 and several other departments of the Saint-Luc University Hospital at UCL between 2006 and 2015.

Christian Delloye was president of the Belgian Royal Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology from 2014 to 2016. He founded the European Musculoskeletal Association for Transplantation (EAMST) with Franz Langlais. He was a member of the Belgian Royal Academy of Medicine, as well as of the French National Academy of Surgery¹ and many other scientific societies including the GSF-GETO² and SoFCOT³. All those who

¹ Académie Nationale de Chirurgie.

² Groupe Sarcomes Français-Groupe d'Etude des Tumeurs Osseuses (French Sarcoma Task Force-Bone Tumour Study Group).

³ Société Française de Chirurgie Orthopédique et Traumatologique (French Society for Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgery).

knew him or worked alongside him will remember the meticulousness of his interventions and strong attachment to ethics. Knighted by King Albert II in 2012, he chose 'straight on' as his motto.

We – and orthopaedic surgery – have lost an exceptional scientist and admirable physician.

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