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Obituary

Alberto Gulino MD, PhD (1952–2014)

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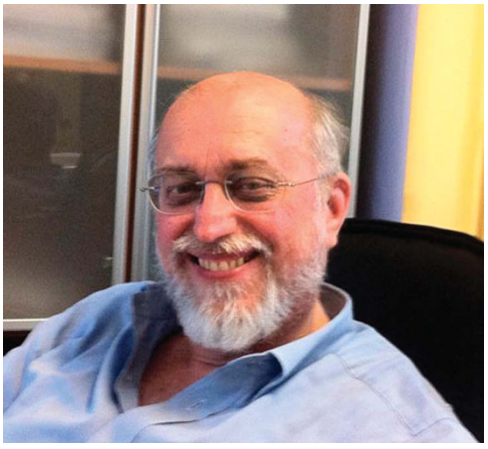

Alberto Gulino passed away on November 25, 2014. He will be dearly missed by family, friends and colleagues. Alberto was an enthusiastic scientist who provided important insights into several fields and critical support to young scientists.

After graduating in medicine and surgery and specializing in endocrinology at the Catholic University in Rome (Italy), Alberto began his scientific career as a PhD student in biochemistry and developmental biology at the University of Paris. Following his doctoral degree he moved on to become a research associate at the Foundation for Hormone Research in Paris in the group of J Pasqualini, where he addressed the early role of estrogens and of selective estrogen receptor modulators. Alberto, subsequently, returned to his beloved Rome as an assistant professor at Sapienza University, where he continued work on steroid hormones, investigating the biochemical features of nuclear receptor complexes and their role in immunomodulation and tumorigenesis.

Following a period at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, USA, Alberto was appointed associate professor at the University of L'Aquila (Italy), then full professor and, later on, dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery. Alberto was also heavily involved in education being director of the PhD program in experimental medicine, director of the school of specialization in oncology, and director of the department of experimental medicine. During these years he guided the transformation of the Faculty of Medicine at L'Aquila into a modern and enterprising structure, favoring the return of talented abroad-trained Italian researchers.

Back in Rome, at Sapienza University, Alberto's contagious enthusiasm for science and excellence led him to become director of the Laboratory of Molecular Oncology, director of the PhD Program in molecular medicine, and head of the imaging and treatment of brain cancer and the stem cell program of the Italian Institute of Technology at Sapienza University. His abilities to organize scientific events can also be highlighted by the superb and intense Hedgehog meeting he organized in Rome, at a fantastic small hotel facing Palazzo Farnese near Campo de' Fiori and Piazza Navona. The comment of the younger students was that it was 'terrible' since the talks and discussions were so good that they did not have time to do all the things they had planned to do in Rome.

Alberto Gulino's scientific contributions have been notable in different fields but we wish to highlight his work on the mechanism of acetylation and modulation of Gli proteins,[1] the regulation of GLI by Numb,[2] as well as his work on the regulation of HH signaling by miRNAs.[3] In all three works Alberto and his team explored new territory and advanced the field by revealing intricate mechanisms using state of the art genetic, biochemical and cellular analyses. These findings now provide a fertile ground for continued progress in the understanding of the regulation and biological importance of HH signaling.

Alberto was exceedingly generous and humble, keeping a healthy mixture of skepticism and trust. It will be impossible to forget his love of science and his style, where complex expositions crystallized in important insights and solid work. Alberto had a particular relational warmth and was admired by many of his coworkers, who saw in him a guiding and protecting figure. It will also be impossible to forget being a guest of Alberto in Rome, dining at superb small local restaurants where he and his wife, Isabella Screpanti, were known by name by the owners and the cooks, or visiting magnificent monuments or small streets and listening to Isabella tell stories of Rome, as only Romans can tell. Alberto was an important figure in Italian and European science, and a wonderful person. He will be missed at home and abroad by many friends and colleagues.

We thank his students Enrico De Smaele, Elisabetta Ferreti, Lucia Di Marcotullio and Luca Canettieri for biographical information.

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