

INSIGHTS



In memoriam: Jean-Pierre Guignard, MD, PhD, Professor

Jean-Bernard Gouyon¹, Jean-Michel Hascoët² and Silvia Iacobelli^{1,3} 

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Jean-Pierre Guignard died on April 14, 2022 at the “Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois (CHUV)” in Lausanne (CH) where he worked as an associate and then as a full-time professor from 1972 to 2004, year of his retirement as honorary professor.

Jean-Pierre Guignard was born in 1939 in Lignerolle in the canton of Vaud (Switzerland). He had a happy childhood, surrounded by a loving family who supported him in his studies that were brilliant. He attended a classical Latin–Greek education at the High School of Lausanne, the city where he then studied medicine. He completed his medical degree in 1964 and submitted his thesis in medicine in 1966.

From then on, he was received for a period of 3 years at the Lausanne Institute of Pharmacology and Toxicology directed by Professor Georges Peters, a doctor, a pharmacologist, and a renowned international researcher who devoted himself to the renal function physiology, pharmacology, and the study of their development. Jean-Pierre Guignard has always considered Georges Peters as his master because he had taught him not only research key values and renal physiology and pharmacology but also philosophy. Georges Peters helped Jean-Pierre think about his scientific career, particularly regarding the choice of research laboratories where he would continue his training. His departure abroad was preceded by a first encounter with Professor Emile Gauthier, who was requested to act as the rapporteur of Jean-Pierre Grignard’s postgraduate thesis. Professor Emile Gauthier was at that time responsible for the care of pediatric renal diseases at the Lausanne Hospital.

In his training journey, Jean-Pierre Guignard spent consecutively 18 months in London (London Hospital Medical College and St-Thomas Hospital), 18 months in Vancouver (University of British Columbia), and 12 months in Montreal (Royal Victoria Hospital, McGill University). Wishing to complete his practice on childhood kidney disease, it was at the Pediatric Hospital of Social Security (Hospital Pediatrico del Seguro Social) that he worked for a year in Mexico City. Ultimately, Jean-Pierre Guignard decided to return to Lausanne, called by Professor Emile Gauthier to develop a pediatric nephrology unit and a research laboratory in developmental nephrology at the CHUV. That was fulfilled in 1972 and then Jean-Pierre Guignard became the founder of pediatric nephrology in the canton of Vaud and in French-speaking Switzerland.

The Pediatric Nephrology Unit brought to the CHUV pediatric hemodialysis (1972), kidney transplantation (1975), and chronic peritoneal dialysis (1978). Additionally, patients benefited from a renal functional exploration unit because the essentials of biochemical explorations and assays were carried out on site at the research laboratory in nephrology. Children with kidney failure

became less numerous because the risk of renal deterioration of urological malformations was better and better controlled by anti-infective preventive measures that Jean-Pierre Guignard had greatly contributed to study and disseminate within the medical community and families of sick children. Despite a constant overloaded schedule, patients have always been his absolute priority. The research unit allowed it because it was very autonomous: the level of the technical staff was very high and animation of the laboratory was generally ensured by a foreign senior who was in research training.

This nephrology laboratory was unique in several aspects:

- it was based on animal experimentation (mice, rabbits, young rabbits) that was managed according to a rigorous organization and ethics.
- the research unit was small. The technical staff was limited in number but dedicated and very efficient.
- developmental nephrology was rarely a main theme of European research laboratories. The importance of perinatal renal stress in the long-term outcome of children and adult’s health will prove to be a priority research field in the 1990s.
- some experimental models required several years of development and validation (4 years for the exploration of young rabbit renal functions). These models were an invaluable source of physiological and pathophysiological knowledge on the perinatal kidney, responding to daily problems raised by sick newborns to the pediatricians. Numerous relevant clinical and experimental studies related to glomerular filtration, tubular functions, the renal consequences of hypoxemia, mechanical ventilation, medication (aminoglycosides, inotropes, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, methylxanthines). Jean-Pierre Guignard was also one of the first explaining that the physiology of the premature neonate led him to lose water and weight within the first days of life, because of extracellular adaptation. This helped Neonatologists throughout the world to adapt initial infants’ intake lowering the risk of patent ductus arteriosus and chronic lung disease in preemies.

In total, the work of Jean-Pierre Guignard in pediatric and perinatal nephrology were received in the most famous scientific journals and led him to publish over 550 articles and book chapters from 1966 to 2016.

All this explains why Jean-Pierre Guignard became quickly an international key reference in the fields of pediatric nephrology and neonatal pharmacology. This position led him to create the

¹Centre d’Études Périnatales de l’Océan Indien, UR 7388, Université de la Réunion, Saint Pierre, France. ²Maternité Régionale Universitaire A. Pinard, Nancy, France. ³Service de Réanimation Néonatale et Pédiatrique, Néonatalogie, CHU La Réunion, Saint Pierre, France. ✉email: silvia.iacobelli@chu-reunion.fr

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European Society for Developmental Pharmacology (1988) and the International Symposium of perinatal Nephrology (1998). Jean-Pierre Guignard was also a member of the ESPN committees (European Society for Pediatric Nephrology) and IPNA (International Pediatric Nephrology Association) from 1995 to 2001. In 1996, he organized and chaired the ESPN Annual Congress at the CHUV of Lausanne.

As a renowned speaker, he has given more than 600 conferences in national and international meetings. The audience was always very numerous and knew that Professor Jean-Pierre Guignard's presentations were always adapted to the knowledge level of the audience, that the approach was always original and clinical, that the slides would be simple, meaningful and often very beautiful, and that the presentation time would be honored. Everything was enhanced by perfect diction, a typical Vaudois accent, and a touch of spontaneous or prepared humor. Often in English, the quality of the presentations remained the same.

His qualities as a teacher led Professor Jean-Pierre Guignard to be invited to a number of countries where he trained pediatricians in pediatric nephrology and neonatologists in developmental nephrology. Those trainings took him to Algeria, Lebanon, Italy, France, Hungary, England, Canada, and the USA. He even went on missions with enthusiasm to some less-favored areas (Vietnam, Western Sahara, Cuba). Vietnam and Cuba have always remained very close to his humanist aspirations and his missions there were frequent. He was an inspiring mentor to generations of students, residents, fellows, and faculty.

Jean Pierre Guignard loved to travel as his friends were all over the world. When arriving as a guest speaker to a meeting, he used to offer a book to the organizer for sharing thoughts and ideas. Many of his friends and colleagues will remember the enthusiastic and inspiring discussions that followed. He had friends at heart in all fields including literature, the arts, and some dead people he would have loved to make his own. Georges Brassens was at the forefront of this pantheon. He was his first master in poetry, in impertinence, and humanity.

His status as a "Vaudois Citizen of the World," his professional skills, his pro-European positions explain why he was an honorary member or referee of many pediatric organizations (Italy, Hungary, Spain, Mexico, France), and that he was awarded major prizes, among which are:

- The De Cerenville Prize of Lausanne University (1970).
- The Guido Fanconi Prize of the Swiss Pediatric Society (1983).
- The Ira Greifer Prize awarded by the IPNA (2016) "in recognition for his major contribution in the field of renal development physiology and for his incredible ability to bring people together and help them develop." This prize was the recognition of an exceptional situation, involving a doctor, specialist in childhood kidney disease, who has greatly contributed to the clinical and fundamental knowledge of these diseases; one academic who created a network of people turned towards health (physicians and non-physicians); one "taste for others" who has a special attention to disadvantaged social classes with an active attitude to improve their situation; one universal message of fraternity. It is certain that the strong and effective involvement of Professor Jean-Pierre Guignard in the Swiss Health Center was in the logic of a life focused on People and Life.

This was done thanks to courage and a will associated with a restorative humor.

Didn't he say towards the end of his life "Let's keep hope, a miracle is always possible."

It is family happiness with his Dear ones, Françoise married in London in 1968 and Anaïs born in 1981, that gave him a constant, powerful, and discrete support. Two small children Margaux and Maxime brought him the joy of being a grandfather.

In his last days, Jean-Pierre recalled and said that his life had been beautiful. He has also embellished and enlightened the lives of those he had cared for, his friends, and shown each one his importance to others.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing interests.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Silvia Iacobelli.

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