

IN MEMORIAM



On September 28, Antonella passed away, leaving us in deep dismay. I first met Antonella Barreca thirty years ago, when she was a third-year medical student; on the advice of her brother Tomaso, my dear friend and classmate, she had begun to frequent our laboratory.

Our group had been working for a few years on what was known at that time as "Somatomedin". We were all very young, full of enthusiasm, and short of funds. We were, I think, the only "crackpots" in Italy in the RIA age who were studying that mysterious factor, which could only be measured by means of an extremely laborious biological assay that was time-consuming and required the utmost care and precision. Antonella was the only one among us who had grasped the true value of that research, and she embraced it with passion, with discre-

tion, without ostentation. Right from the start, she made an important contribution to improving the quality of our laboratory. Her degree thesis on the relationships between the kidney and somatomedin activity was already indicative of her character and intelligence. Indeed, unlike the majority of medical students in Italy, whose contribution to a thesis is often limited to performing manual tasks in the laboratory and reviewing the bibliography, Antonella played a key role in drawing up the discussion.

After graduating, she continued to work with us, even though the prospects of gaining a position within our group were very vague and certainly not imminent. It was with pride that she would later remember how she had to wait some seven years before being given an official position; and even then, it was a temporary one on the research doctorate course. In the meantime, she kept busy in the laboratory, where most of her time was spent. What little spare time she had was devoted to earning just enough to enable her to pursue her dream: to do research. For us, those were years of hard work; they were years of very hard work for her.

An important milestone in her life was her experience in 1984 in Utrecht. There, she worked in Leo Van den Brande's laboratory, at the time one of the most prestigious, where the sequence of the IGF-II gene had just been characterised. She came back tougher, more mature and even more determined.

From then on, she channelled most of her efforts into purifying and characterising an entity even more mysterious than the IGF: the ALS. The existence of this factor had been posited a few years earlier by Rick Furlanetto on the basis of a series of results that no one had yet succeeded in reproducing. Antonella succeeded. She then devoted herself body and soul to its purification. Her efforts, however, were only partly successful, in that Rob Baxter's group beat her to it, thanks to the availability of financial and technological resources that we can only dream of. And yet, more tenaciously than ever, she persevered, her numerous contributions to science being of the highest order. These were the fruits of her group's work and of the world-wide web of collaboration that she had woven over the years, thanks to her willingness to co-operate with anyone, without the reticence that vigorous competition often arouses.

Antonella has left us. She has bequeathed to us her own personal dream, collaboration, and a wealth of

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