Obituary

In Memoriam: professor Antonio Salvetti (1936–2021)

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Professor Antonio Salvetti passed away on 18 February 2021, at the age of 84 years. We express our deepest condolences to his wife, children and grandchildren.

Professor Salvetti was born in Lerici, a village at the border between Liguria and Tuscany, on 4 December 1936. He obtained his medical degree at the University of Pisa in 1960 and the Postgraduate Speciality in Cardiology at the University of Turin, 2 years later. After completing his studies, he was immediately asked to join the staff of the Division of Internal Medicine of the Medical School and the Santa Chiara Hospital of the University of Pisa, which was then under the Chairmanship of Professor Fabio Tronchetti. In that Division, he has worked for his entire academical career, starting as a young ‘voluntary’ assistant and climbing all steps of the academic ladder up to the position of Full Professor of Medical Therapy in 1984 and then Full Professor of Internal Medicine in 1990. Over his long and productive clinical, teaching and scientific activity, he was appointed Director of the Department of Internal Medicine (2000–2008), Director of the Postgraduate School of Internal Medicine, Director of the Division of General Medicine of the newly formed Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria Pisana and Director of the Hospital Department of Medicine from 2001 to his retirement in 2007.

Antonio Salvetti was an expert clinician, which made him a reference figure among the hospital doctors when help was needed to resolve difficult clinical cases. However, there is no question that his clinical and scientific preference was directed, since almost the beginning of his carrier, to hypertension where he achieved national and international recognition. In 1980, Professor Salvetti founded the Center for Diagnosis and Treatment of Hypertension, which over the years became a Regional Reference Center and a European Excellence Center for the Diagnosis and Treatment of this condition, being ranked fourth among all European Hypertension Centers for the quality of scientific research. He was a founding member of the Italian Society of Nephro-Cardiology and of the Italian Society of Hypertension for which he served for several years first as Secretary and then as President. He was part of the group, which decades ago gave birth to the World Hypertension League, translating into reality an idea of professor Bartorelli from Milan and Dr Strasser from WHO. He received the Award of the Italian Society of Hypertension for excellence in research on hypertension in 2000 and was awarded in 2007, the prestigious Cherubino Honor for scientific merits by the University of Pisa. He was also appointed Professor Emeritus of the University of Cordoba (Argentina) in 2001. He has often been an invited lecturer at international Meetings on hypertension, those organized by the International and the European Societies of Hypertension, in particular. The sharpness and directness of his criticism made him an especially desired participant in debates, which the audience enjoyed very much.

The scientific interests of Professor Salvetti covered the pathogenetic mechanisms of arterial hypertension, with special attention to the role of the renin–angiotensin system, the endothelial dysfunction and the vascular and cardiac structural alterations related to this disease. Many of his observations were pioneering at the time they were made, as also testified by publication of his articles (over 400) in prestigious international peer-reviewed journals.

Professor Antonio Salvetti was a person of great scientific and clinical knowledge and depth of thinking. In the fields he was involved with as an investigator, he was a forerunner and exhibited a translational approach that always aimed at finding a relationship between clinical investigations in humans and experimental models of hypertension. His passion for medical research was contagious and
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passed onto many medical students and colleagues. At clinical level, he blended his wide medical culture with daily clinical practice, in which he displayed the ability to listen and interpret the patient symptoms, ultimately resulting in precise diagnoses and tailored therapeutic decisions. Nothing was ever left to chance by him when patients were involved, and above all, every decision had to be substantiated by solid clinical and scientific evidence.

Professor Salvetti was not known to be an easily approachable person, and people were sometimes a bit disconcerted by his competitiveness and directness. Behind the appearance, however, he was a very generous man, ready to understand the problems of those who turned to him and to help them whenever this was possible. He had three great passions: family, work and sport. He considered the sport as a serious affair on which to translate his view of work as something requiring the best of yourself and all efforts to win the confrontation. However, he used in sport what he did in life, that is, the moral values of loyalty, sincerity and extreme correctness.

There is no doubt that Antonio Salvetti has been an example, a leader and a teacher to people around him. Not only he introduced the study of arterial hypertension in Pisa, founding one of the most important clinical hypertension centers in Italy, but he was able to create a stimulating scientific environment for his young collaborators, providing them with the opportunity to fully exploit their clinical and research potentialities. Although he has left us, the cultural and scientific heritage he was able to create will not be lost.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.