We all know a few aged individuals who are still storming through their professional lives in their late seventies and even later into the 8th and 9th decades. For geriatricians, this is delightful, because it demonstrates that active aging, at an intellectual and physical level, is not only the most appealing theory of our discipline, but also it can be a thrilling reality.

I was particularly honoured to be asked by the Editor-in-Chief, Prof Jean-Pierre Michel, to write about the career achievements of my mentor, Prof Gaetano Crepaldi, because this is not just a tribute to a great geriatrician and scientist, but to magnificent aging as well! Prof Gaetano Crepaldi is a 78-year-old Emeritus Professor of Internal Medicine in the School of Medicine, University of Padua (Italy) and, currently, Director of the Aging Section of the National Research Council-Institute of Neuroscience. Everyone knows that he is simply ignoring the “usual retirement age” and does not even think about leaving his position. I know from working with him almost every day of the year, that he is a clear minded, straightforward, always updated scientist, with endless energy and eager to continue working in the field of aging, both in clinical and research settings.

“Why should I quit, when I get so much enjoyment from my work? I can still raise funds for my research group and I can advise the younger doctors in this critical time for research, and for medical research in particular. My patients are still relying on me and I have taken care of some of them for more than 30, 40, even 50 years; many of them are aging with me! I believe that my active lifestyle is reassuring them, because I am a good example that aging does not mean “giving up”. Moreover, I am not on the payroll of the CNR, and this surely is a good deal for this institution. If it had to pay for my professional expertise (about 55 years in the field of Medicine), and my international reputation, I would bankrupt the already financially unstable CNR!”

This is what Prof Crepaldi says, and, as geriatricians, the only comment we can make is “Keep going!”

Indeed, Prof Crepaldi is still going strong in his career: he graduated from the School of Medicine at the University of Padova, Italy, in 1955, and soon after held a postdoctoral Fellowship in haematology of the University of California in Los Angeles, United States, until 1957. His American stage, as he always says, has been crucial to his career, because it opened up his mind to the relevance of international collaborations in science. Indeed, he has subsequently promoted several initiatives that have been instrumental for the development of Geriatric Medicine in Italy: since the late 1970s, he has been a key actor in the development of the US–Italy Bilateral Agreement for Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology, promoting the training of many Italian scientists in the US. In Italy, he has mentored several generations of researchers and clinicians in Aging, and most of them are currently in prominent academic and professional positions in many centres around the country.

Since 1975, Prof Crepaldi was Full Professor of Gerontology and Geriatrics and Director of the Division of Gerontology and Metabolic diseases at the University of Padua; in 1976, he founded the first Postgraduate School in Gerontology and Geriatrics in Padua and served as the Director until 1992. During these years, his career developed more in the field of Internal Medicine, because in 1981 he became Full Professor of Internal Medicine and served as the Director of the Department of Internal Medicine until 2003. But his interest in Geriatric Medicine has never decreased, and this is confirmed by his position, from 1988 to 1994, as President of the Italian Society of Gerontology and Geriatrics. He also took on the task of establishing the first Program for Research on Aging of the CNR in the 1980s and created for the first time in Italy a network of geriatricians and gerontologists working from basic science to epidemiology. This effort was crucial in establishing international visibility and building up the main cross-national collaborations, still ongoing, with European and American scientists.

I would also mention here, as an outstanding example of his continuous devotion to Geriatrics, the organization of the International Courses of Geriatric Epidemiology held in Padua early in the 1990s. The courses gathered together experts from the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD and from the National Institute on Aging, NIH, Bethesda and young geriatricians from Italy, Chile, Colombia, and Eastern Europe as students.

In 1989, Prof Crepaldi was awarded the Feltrinelli Prize in Medicine by the National Academy of Lincei and, in 1991, the Special Merit Award of the Sandoz Foundation in recognition of gerontological research.

Prof Crepaldi’s current positions include: an official Italian Representative on the Board of the International Association of Gerontology and member of the Board of Directors of the American Federation for Aging Research, President of the Mediterranean Society of Atherosclerosis (MSA), President of the Mediterranean...
Society for Osteoporosis and other Skeletal Diseases (MSOSD) and President of the European Society for Cardiovascular Prevention.

Professor Crepaldi is the author of more than 600 scientific articles on aging and metabolic diseases, published in major national and international scientific journals. He is editor of several textbooks, such as the Trattato Italiano di Gerontologia e Geriatria and the Trattato Italiano di Medicina Interna. He is Editor-in-chief of the International Journal Aging: Clinical and Experimental Research, and a member of the Editorial Board of numerous journals including Current Opinion in Lipidology; Diabetes Nutrition and Metabolism; Acta Diabetologica; Pharmacological Sciences, Drugs and Aging; The Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging; Journal of Cardiovascular Risk, among others.

Geriatricians know that Prof Crepaldi is still an important voice for us and, increasingly, he is also an important voice for older persons. What a gift, to be in his position as a strong positive force for science in his country and in the wider world of Geriatric Medicine!

What characteristics do we recognize as instrumental in determining his successful aging? First, he gets great pleasure in his life and his work. He has developed and sustained very important “missions” that have helped him maintain a high-energy approach to life. He continues to engage his brain to the fullest in work that is very challenging and to educate himself about what is happening in the world. As a consequence, he is an important source of wisdom for his colleagues, and for everyone who has the privilege of knowing him.

Conflicts of interest

None.

Further reading


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