

ACAD. LAURENȚIU MIRCEA POPESCU
(1944–2015)



Inheriting from his ancestors a bright and active mind, it is not surprising that he was one of the leaders of his generation. He graduated the Faculty of Medicine from Bucharest in 1967 as valedictorian, already in 1972 he sustained his PhD thesis and soon became Assistant Lecturer at the Histology and Embryology Chair, having as Professor during his student period the illustrious personality of Prof. I.T. Niculescu (1985–1957). As a real savant formed at the French School, he contributed in the development of the histology and various cell studies, with special achievements in adipobiology and nervous system. Not by chance, the young absolvent choose a Histology and Embryology Specialty where he followed all of the formation steps starting with position of extern (1964–1966), intern (1966–1968) of the hospitals in Bucharest and Assistant (1971–1979). In this period he benefited from two fellowships in Holland (1977) and Maryland USA (1981), the latest being done in the period in which he obtained already the position of Lecturer (1979–1990). The Romanian revolution in 1989 came in time for him becoming Associated Professor in 1990 and Professor in 1992, when he is also elected as Rector of University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” Bucharest, maintaining this position 12 years (1992–2004) – one of the longest in the history of this institution.

In 1993, he obtained the position of Director of Pathology Institute “Victor Babes” Bucharest, to which he devoted his energy till the last breath. In 1994, he founded the Journal of Cellular and Molecular Medicine, which afterwards was taken by Springer Printing House and became one of the important international journals.

Between 2003 and 2014 he served in parallel as President of Medical Section of the Romanian Academy and President of the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences.

In the last 5 years he dedicated all his efforts for the study of former “Cajal-like interstitial cells” known for a long time, but whom signification remained unclear. He was inspired to give to this structures/cells the name “Telocytes” suggested by the numerous prolongations of these cells, called “telopodes”. The term has been rapidly adopted, being now mentioned in many papers and treaties, underlying the already big interest of the researchers for this topic.

Two weeks before his death, I met him last time in his office at “Victor Babes” Institute when he optimistically was waiting for a special issue of a journal devoted to telocytes, and also, a monography on this topic.

A scientometric evaluation showed that LMP-ul, a nickname used by many of his colleagues, has published more than 140 articles in international journals, having more than 3000 citations and Hirsh Index calculated for the last 20 years of 26.

It is worth mentioning that his first publications, one of them from 1985, dedicated to kinases involved in vasodilatation mediated by smooth vascular muscles had more 500 citations, some of them 35 years after its publication, entering already in the category of classical data.

During his life, he sustained numerous lectures invited by universities from USA, China, Japan and Europe, and received a title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* from many Romanian or foreign universities. Probably, one of the most appreciated by him was “*Silver Medal*” awarded by René Descartes University from Paris in 1993. In 2012, he received the “*White Magnolia Award*” from the University of Shanghai, the town where he spent many months for studying and promoting the telocytes.

During the funeral service at the “Icoanei Church”, I was thinking: *Who is going to continue the hard work in order to validate by gene expression and full signification of telocytes?* In one of his last interview, he placed the problem of the telocytes between “*hope and uncertainty*”, so that his dream is not ended.

Professor CONSTANTIN IONESCU-TÎRGOVIȘTE