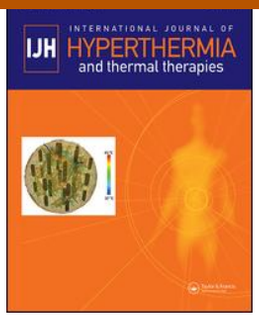

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In memory of Dr. Claudio Maurizio Pacella: a pioneer in clinical applications of image-guided laser ablation

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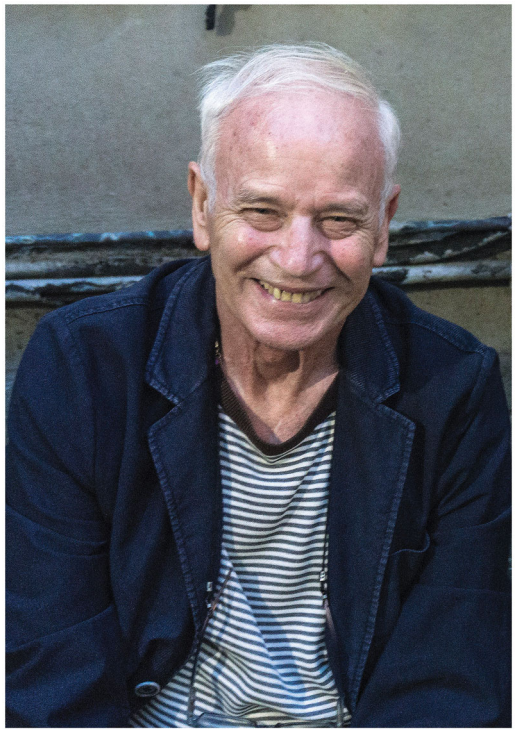
OBITUARY

In memory of Dr. Claudio Maurizio Pacella: a pioneer in clinical applications of image-guided laser ablation



With the passing of Dr. Claudio Maurizio Pacella in January 2020, the medical community has lost one of its prominent members and esteemed colleagues.

Dr. Pacella graduated in 1973 from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Rome, where he subsequently completed his residency in radiology. Since the beginning of his career, due to his high level of empathy with patients, he focused his clinical attention on interventional radiology, striving ceaselessly to perfect therapeutic strategies that were less and less invasive for patients. In the 1980s, he started the percutaneous treatment of liver tumors [1], and since then he continued to apply minimally-invasive, image-guided treatment to the care of his patients. He was among the first in the world to apply ultrasound-guided treatment in patients with thyroid nodules [2,3], and made outstanding contributions to the widespread use of minimally-invasive treatments in patients with thyroid diseases.

With an ever-inquiring mind, sensitivity, and with acute intelligence, he started investigating the possibility of applying laser energy in the treatment of cancer patients, and his studies and experiments led to a technique for ultrasound-guided liver laser ablation, which he first successfully applied in the treatment of patients with liver metastases [4]. Following this, he investigated the application of laser to thyroid tissue [5,6], and developed and described a technique for laser ablation of thyroid nodules, which is now considered as current best practice for these treatments. Highly devoted to the dissemination of knowledge and the personal growth and career development of younger colleagues, he unfailingly showed immense dedication and invested indefatigable energy in teaching and education, being responsible for fellowship training in Italy and traveling extensively throughout the world to visit and assist colleagues at the beginning of their practice with laser ablation. Several physicians worldwide started their practice in laser ablation thanks to the assistance and teachings of Dr. Pacella, and a multitude of patients benefitted from his groundbreaking discoveries.

Following on from Pacella' studies, laser ablation is today applied in the treatment of a variety of diseases, including not only liver and benign thyroid nodules, but also kidney, pancreatic and thyroid tumors and, most recently benign, and malignant prostate disease [7–14].

Even after his retirement, Dr. Pacella continued to assist colleagues and to participate in the scientific community providing exceptional insights into the potential of application of thermal ablations to the care of patients. In particular, in recent years, he developed a new technique for the treatment of benign prostatic adenomas, which with the application of laser through the transperineal route seems to provide a new minimally-invasive effective treatment strategy for patients [13,14]. Always extremely active and with an incredible amount of energy, he recently participated in the foundation of a study group on the application of minimally-invasive treatments to the thyroid [15], and proposed to the international community a standardized terminology to be used in this field [16]. Furthermore, he was among the first to propose thermal ablation as a first-line treatment modality for the treatment of benign thyroid nodules [17]. His recent book on the various applications of image-guided laser ablations, already represents a milestone in the field of thermal ablations [18].

The community of physicians who use the laser thermal ablation method loses its tireless guide. From today, the work of all of us will feel an enormous gap that was filled by a teacher, a Counselor and, above all, a friend. It will be everyone's responsibility to ensure that the outstanding scientific and cultural heritage left by Dr. Pacella continues to grow and bear fruit. We will all miss him immensely and he will never be forgotten as a pioneer and as an amiable, good-natured, creative, and passionate person.

Our deepest sympathy and thoughts are with his wife and his family. Together with them, his many colleagues and

friends will hold Dr. Claudio Maurizio Pacella in grateful memory.

Goodbye Claudio, we will miss you.

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