

Obituary



Remembering Luisa Leone (1967-2014)

It is with great sadness that we share with you that our dear colleague and friend Luisa Leone passed away on October 16, 2014. After her college degree in Humanities, Luisa specialized in Library Science at the well-known Vatican School. She was an active member of EAHIL and contributed a number of publications to the Journal. She was awarded a scholarship for participating in the Helsinki Conference in 2008, where she was accompanied by Lavinia and Sofia, her young daughters, and by her husband Vincenzo. She was very thankful to EAHIL for this opportunity, and enjoyed the conference and the possibility of meeting colleagues from other European countries. Luisa worked from 2003 to 2014 in several Projects of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), Rome, based in three different departments.

Luisa started working at the Documentation Service of the ISS in 2003 within the SIBIL (Sistema Informativo per la Bioetica in Linea) Project, writing the scope notes of the Italian thesaurus of Bioethics. She continued her professional pathway in the bioethics area contributing to the development of ETHICSWEB technical guides, a series of guidelines to implement XML schemas for sharing information on Document-Like Information Objects (DLIO), learning resources, knowledge organization systems, experts and training programs in the field of ethics and science. She also contributed in July 2012 to the draft of a project on health literacy, eventually funded by the Ministry of Health. Her presence was pivotal in the many and various events of the projects of the Documentation Service, thanks to her natural gifts of communication, savoir-faire and professional attitude. We shall always remember Luisa as a little strong woman, with deep black eyes, devoted to her family and determined to build up her working career. She didn't have less than four things to do at a time, always busy, always in a hurry, but she always had everything under control. Her background of humanities studies, coupled with a deep culture of arts and literature, have spurred her curiosity in pathways hard to find in a scientific Institute. Her contribution to the development of the activities of the Documentation Service made her an invaluable co-worker and, most of all, a dear friend.

Maurella Della Seta and all the colleagues of the Documentation Service of the ISS

I had the pleasure and honor to have Luisa as collaborator and friend from 2004 to 2006. I met Luisa at a difficult time of my scientific carrier. I had just returned from the USA where I had collaborated with the team coordinated by Dr. Pablo Rubinstein of the New York Blood Center that developed the storing criteria for the clinical use of cord blood, a previously discarded source of stem cells, for autologous and allogenic transplantation. When I left the USA, I mentally prepared myself to the challenges I had to face to initiate my research activity in Italy. I was aware that I had to change my research topic and adjust my expectations to a different economic environment. I was, however, sure that these challenges could be overcome by hard work, enthusiasm and a realistic attitude. However, no one maybe, is ever prepared for the day-by-day differences of communication codes in the working place of two nations so different as USA and Italy. And it was when the so called "system" had tested my self-confidence so badly that I met Luisa. She was looking for a job and I had a position opened that was tailored for Luisa.

The reputation I had gained working abroad had opened me the way to collaborate with several international working teams. These collaborations had assured me funding from the European Community to start my own research activity in Rome. This activity required support from a trustful collaborator that could manage the nuances required to maintain and foster fruitful interactions among scientists in a multicultural environment. I do not remember if I chose Luisa for the position or instead Luisa chose me as the person to devote her assistance. But I must say that with her cheerful character and positive attitude she helped me enormously regaining my confidence. I have several personal memories of that short period of collaboration. But there is also a tangible memory. Luisa and I organized together the 1st international workshop on "Molecular Control of Erythropoiesis" at the ISS from September 22nd to September 23rd of 2005. This workshop was sponsored by the Marie Curie Research training Network Eurython and included more than 15 speakers and 200 students from all over Europe. I may not say how much Luisa loved this project and how fondly

she devoted herself to it. She put her heart and soul in making this event the success that all the participants remember. She found the most suitable accommodation and transportation not only for the speakers but also for the students, with their limited budget. She also organized extra-meeting activities of the highest artistic level. Her assistance was so important for the success of this event that I asked her help again 6 years later, in 2011, when I organized another international workshop in Rome focused on the emerging field of blood farming, that is to make safe blood for transfusion in a test tube (International Workshop “Making blood from progenitors ex-vivo”, Rome, ISS, September 19th, 2011).

I would like to take this opportunity to dedicate a few words to Luisa’s family, her daughters and her husband. Her daughters in particular were too young at the time of my collaboration with Luisa to appreciate why their mother was enthusiastically helping me in our tasks, and dedicating to our projects a devotion much greater than my salary could ever compensate. I think Luisa had the highest esteem for a job well done. For her, a job was not a “fatigue” to keep far away from our personal daily life: it was something to do with pride and to be proud of. I hope that her daughters will have inherited this trait of Luisa. We are in great need for people with such a working discipline. It is the only talent I know that allows everyday persons to achieve great things in history.

Anna Rita Migliaccio, Research Director in Transfusion Medicine of the ISS

Luisa joined the Italian Arthroplasty Registry Project (RIAP) at the National Centre for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion (CNESPS) of the ISS in October 2011. A new world, a mechanical engineer responsible for the project, new professionals, such as orthopaedic surgeons, and new topics such as epidemiology, orthopaedics and medical devices, did not make any difficulties for her, but in fact the contrary. Every morning she entered our room with new ideas and proposals to give added value to the project. Thanks to her natural facility in networking, she succeeded in achieving something that I had been trying to do but fruitlessly for several years: to start a close cooperation with the IT department, a collaboration that, today, is a keystone for the registry activities. She applied her background on bioethics to develop with Virgilia Toccaceli – the reference person for the protection of the confidentiality of the personal data in the project Steering Committee – the informed consent document currently in use in the hospitals participating in the RIAP data collection. She was also included as a scientific secretary and lecturer in the bioethics course organized by CNESPS. But her particular attention was for the patients. She often reminded me to keep in mind that the final aim of the project was to make the patient informed and to develop the health literacy. With this aim, she included in the project website a page dedicated to patients; this work was presented as a poster in the last EAHIL Conference held in Rome in June 2014. She enjoyed her life and her enthusiastic character injected a positive harmony in our group boosting the project development. As her husband Vincenzo told me, she was able to make stones smile!

We are lucky because we have had the opportunity to share her these past years. Although knowing she was ill, she never stopped being interested in her job. We will never forget her smile, her elegance and all she gave us as a colleague and, most important, as a dear friend.

Marina Torre and all the colleagues of the RIAP project of the ISS