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INTRODUCTION

A BRIDGE AMONG HISTORY AND NEW MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES: THE ROLE OF G.I.S.N. IN THE FIELD OF NEUROMORPHOLOGY

G.C. Panzica^{1,2}, F. Michetti³, S.K.Tayebati⁴, R. De Giorgio⁵, R. Mariotti⁶, A. Pacini⁷, M. Quartu⁸

¹*Department of Neuroscience, Rita Levi Montalcini, University of Torino, Italy;* ²*Neuroscience Institute Cavalieri Ottolenghi (NICO), Orbassano, Italy;* ³*Department of Neuroscience, Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, Roma, Italy;* ⁴*Human Anatomy Section, School of Pharmacy, University of Camerino Italy;* ⁵*Department of Morphology, Surgery and Experimental Medicine, University of Ferrara, Italy;* ⁶*Department of Neuroscience, Biomedicine, and Movement Sciences, University of Verona, Italy;* ⁷*Department of Experimental and Clinical Medicine, Anatomy Section, University of Firenze, Italy;* ⁸*Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Cagliari, Italy*

This special issue collects the abstracts of the lectures and communications presented at the 30th National Conference of the Italian Group for the Study of Neuromorphology (G.I.S.N.), a scientific association founded to promote and develop neuroscience education and research preferentially related to the field of morphology of nervous system. The community of Italian scientists is particularly involved in the field of Neurobiology and Neuroanatomy, due to a long historical tradition starting with Gabriele Falloppia (1523-1562) and Bartolomeo Eustachio (1500-1574) that described the organization of the ear, Marcello Malpighi (1628-1694), who applied the recently dis-

covered microscope to the study of the nervous system, Giovanni Battista Morgagni (1682- 1771) who linked brain alterations to neurological diseases, and Luigi Rolando (1773-1831) who described human cerebral convolutions. Neuroanatomical studies had a great boost with the development of fixation and staining techniques, and the contribution of Camillo Golgi (1843-1926) in this field was a milestone recognized by the award of the Nobel Prize (1906). This long tradition of neuroanatomical studies has been perpetuated by several disciples of these giants of the early period of medical studies and has come down to our days, as evidenced by the Nobel Prize awarded in 1986 to Rita Levi Montalcini (1909-2012). In almost all Italian universities, anatomists are engaged in the study of the nervous system from different points of view, with experimental studies involving animal models of neurological diseases, the link between neural structures and behavior, the effects of the environment or drugs on neural circuits and structures. Several researches are now devoted to fMRI studies that seek to elucidate the connectivity or modifications of the human brain under normal and pathological conditions. These different approaches converge towards the actually consolidated awareness of the unique peculiarity of the nervous system, where the structure is intimately joined to the function, laying the foundations of the growing field of neuroscience nowadays embracing central, peripheral and enteric nervous systems. All these lines of research, and many others, are represented in our group and have been discussed in our meetings. We hope that reading these abstracts can give a picture of the state of the art of Neuromorphology in Italy.

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