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Obituary

Professor Marc-Claude Marti: 1941–2001

Marc-Claude Marti was born on the 13th September 1941 in Geneva where his father was a surgeon. However, his life really began 6 years later following encephalitis, which had erased all his earliest memories. In later years he used to say it was impossible to live quietly after such an experience.

At secondary school he was more interested in the theatre than science. This considerably worried his parents who felt he might follow a career in this rather precarious profession. In time his ideas changed and he enrolled at the University of Geneva to study medicine. On qualification he pursued a career in surgery. His endless enthusiasm towards new ideas and approaches led him to spend time at St Mark's Hospital in London studying colo-proctology. He went on to develop this speciality at the University of Geneva and was one of the early pioneers of ambulatory surgery in his outpatient unit. His world fame came from being the first to describe the posterior perineal block. He used this technique to undertake anal procedures under local anaesthetic as a day case.

In the field of colo-proctology he was the leading force in convincing all the European societies of proctology to merge and form the 'European Council of Proctology'. For more than 15 years, he was the General Secretary of this Society and in this position he used his kindness and patience to bring more than 20 societies together.

Marc-Claude was a member of the group that formed the International Association for Ambulatory Surgery (IAAS) in 1994 and was a member of its Executive Committee from then. At the time of his death he was Vice President of the Association. During his life he organised many international congresses. The last was the IAAS Congress in Geneva in April 2001 and thanks to Marc-Claude's efforts it was a great success.

But the true man is more than his actions and achievements. Marc-Claude was a kind and generous

man with a delightful even temperament and courteousness. He also enjoyed life to the full. Those who knew him well will remember this pipe smoking gourmet who was not afraid, on occasion, to wear the brightest of jackets. His humour was legendary, as was his vast repertoire of jokes which he could recount fluently in at least four languages. Despite the present circumstances, Marc-Claude would certainly have liked one of his stories told here. If perhaps not true, it is well founded: 'Si non e vero e ben trovato' as the Italians would say. An English woman was being examined for anal problems by the head of the surgical department. As he finished with the rectal examination the patient asked him:

"Sorry to bother you Professor, but could you tell me which finger you used for the examination?"

Without any surprise, he answered:

"With the second finger of course!"

"Could you please repeat it with the third finger?" the patient asked.

He did this without hesitation, but asked:

"Why do you want me to do this?"

"Just for a second opinion" she answered.

Marc-Claude Marti died on 26th September 2001 whilst on holiday in Egypt. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

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