

Giampaolo Velo 1943-2017

Giampaolo Velo, a man of great charm and warmth, was a doyen of clinical pharmacology and especially pharmacovigilance, in which he was a major pioneer.



Giampaolo was born in Padua on 30 April 1943. His parents were both scientists; his father, Stefano (1909–49), was a graduate in chemistry and worked for SNIA Viscosa in Padua, and his mother, Serafina (nata Pignataro; 1913–2001), was a graduate in natural sciences and later became a secondary school teacher in Padua, Venice, and Bologna.

Giampaolo went to school first in Padua and then in Bologna, where he studied at the Liceo Ginnasio “Luigi Galvani”. In 1961 he entered the University of Bologna and in July 1967 graduated in medicine with honours.

He then held posts as Assistant Professor in the Institutes of Pharmacology in the University of Bologna (1969–72) and the Universities of Padua and Verona (1972–82), where he became Director of the Institute of Pharmacology in 1977, a post that he held until 1999. In Verona he was Associate Professor of Pharmacology (1982–5), Full Professor of Pharmacology (1986–2012), and Head of the Medical Pharmacology Unit (1994–2012), and in Padua Professor of Pharmacovigilance and Pharmacoepidemiology (2000–7). He retired in 2012, but continued to work diligently until his death on 17 August 2017 from metastatic prostate cancer.

There was hardly an important committee, institution, or organization in the field of pharmacology with which Giampaolo was not involved at some time or other in his career. The Table below gives the details.

Date	Activity
Dec 1970–Jan 1973	NATO and British Council Scholarships at the Pathology Department of St. Bartholomews' Hospital, London
Jul–Sep 1973	Wellcome Trust Italian Research Travel Grant at the Department of Experimental Pathology in St. Bartholomews' Hospital, London
1976–2017	Director of the International School of Pharmacology, Ettore Majorana Foundation and Centre for Scientific Culture, Erice, Sicily
Jul–Aug 1985	Visiting Senior Scientist at the Strangeways Research Laboratory, Cambridge, UK
1988–1992	Secretary General of the Società Italiana Farmacologia (SIF)
1991–1999	Member of the European Pharmacovigilance Research Group (EPRG)
1992–2000	Councillor of the International Union of Pharmacology (IUPHAR), Clinical Pharmacology Division
1993	Founder Member of the European Association for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics (EACPT)
1994–1996	Chairman of the Clinical Pharmacology Section of the Società Italiana Farmacologia
1995–1998	President of the European Inflammation Society (EIS)
1995–1999	Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of EACPT
1997–2012	Director of the Reference Centre for Education and Communication within the WHO Programme for International Drug Monitoring, Verona
1999–2003	Chairman of the Executive Committee of EACPT
2000	Executive President of the VII Conference on Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics and the IV Congress of EACPT (Florence)
2001–2007	Director of the Veneto Region Pharmacovigilance Centre, Verona
2003–2006	President of the International Society of Pharmacovigilance (ISOP)
2003–2007	Chairman of the Clinical Pharmacology Section of the Società Italiana Farmacologia
2005–2008	Member of the Italian Committee for Phase 1, National Health Institute, Rome
2007–2011	Honorary President of EACPT
2009–2012	In charge at the University of Verona for EU2P (European Training Programme in Pharmacovigilance and Pharmacoepidemiology; https://www.eu2p.org/)
2017	Honorary Member of the Società Italiana Farmacologia

The time that Giampaolo spent in St. Bartholomews' Hospital in London in the early 1970s made him an enthusiastic Anglophile, and although his accent was Italian he spoke perfect English. A member of the Royal Society of Medicine, his favourite London hotel was Chandos House, run by that society. He was also a member of the British Pharmacological Society from 1973 and contributed to the activities of its journals, as a Corresponding Editor of the British Journal of Pharmacology (1984–96) and a member of the International Editorial Board of the British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology (2004–11).

His other publishing activities were extensive. From 1998 he was Editor in Chief of the bulletin *FOCUS Farmacovigilanza*, a member of the International Society of Drug Bulletins (<http://www.isdbweb.org>), which is available online in both Italian (<http://www.farmacovigilanza.eu>) and English (<http://www.pharmaco-vigilance.eu>). He was

at various times a member of the editorial boards of: *Advances in Inflammation Research*; *Agents and Actions/Inflammation Research*; *Archives Internationales de Pharmacodynamie et de Thérapie*; *Fundamental and Clinical Pharmacology*; *Inflammopharmacology*; the *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics*; the *International Journal of Immunology and Pharmacology*; the *International Journal of Tissue Reactions*; *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety*; *Pharmacological Research*; *Ricerca & Pratica*; and *Sustainable Chemistry and Pharmacy*. He was a co-editor of the *Inflammation & Drug Therapy Series* (Kluwer Academic Publishers) and of the 14th edition of *Meyler's Side Effects of Drugs: the International Encyclopedia of Adverse Drug Reactions and Interactions* (editors MNG Dukes & JK Aronson; Elsevier, 2000). He was also a member of the Advisory Editorial Board of the *Side Effects of Drugs Annuals (SEDA)* 25, 26, and 27 (editor JK Aronson; Elsevier, 2002, 2003, 2004).

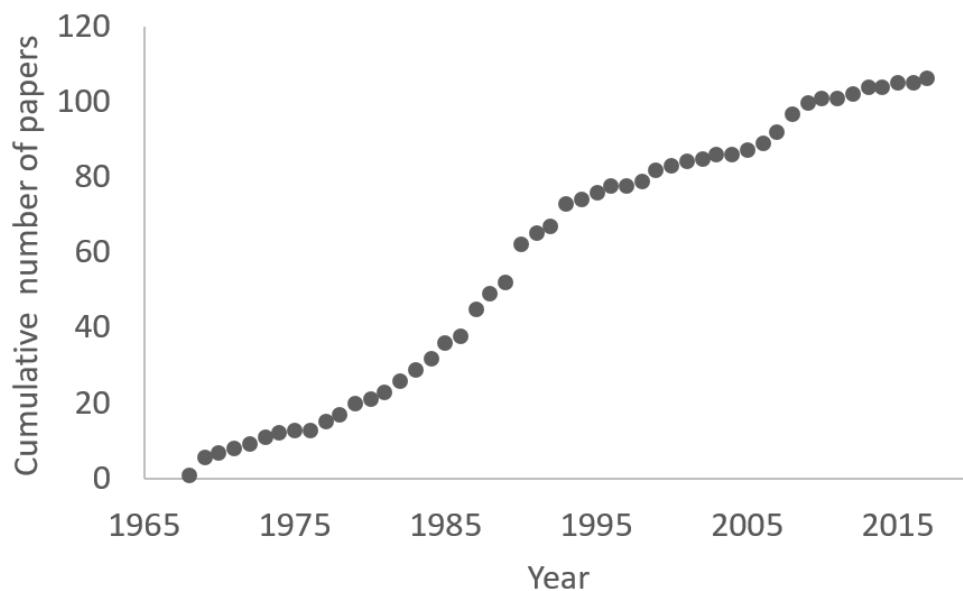
As well as all this, he found time to be involved in two European Projects on Pharmacovigilance, coordinated by Sir Michael Rawlins, and in the European Network of Centres for Pharmacoepidemiology and Pharmacovigilance (ENCePP; <http://www.encepp.eu>).

Giampaolo's research was equally wide, and his resumé refers to 233 published papers and 35 edited books. His first paper, published in 1968, was on the effects of rifampicin on faecal flora in rats [1]. However, his major interest in the early years of his research career was inflammation, eicosanoids, and anti-inflammatory drugs, and he later developed an interest in adverse drug reactions and pharmacovigilance. His last paper was published in January 2017 [2], and there are other papers in the pipeline. For the record, the following analysis is based on 106 papers cited in PubMed:

- he was first or last author on 75 (71%);
- 62 papers (58%) were about topics in some way related to inflammation and 25 (24%) to adverse drug reactions; the rest were on a range of topics in clinical pharmacology, including pharmacokinetics, therapeutics, and policy;
- he had 206 co-authors, of whom the most frequent were A Milanino (28 papers), A Conforti and U Moretti (27 each), L Franco (23), R Leone (19), M Marrella (17), Benoni (15), L Cuzzolin (11), and P Minuz and M Pasqualicchio (8 each);

- he published in 47 different journals (j index 5), the most common of which were *Agents & Actions* (17), *Drug Safety* (9), *Pharmacology Research Communications* (8), and *Acta Physiologica Hungarica*, *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, and *Pharmacology Research* (5 each).

The cumulative numbers of these 106 publications by years are shown below. For those who care about such things, and Giampaolo did not, the papers garnered 2553 citations in all (range 0–217, median 11), with an h index of 29 (source Google Scholar). Giampaolo’s record shows that it is not necessary to have an astronomically high h index to have an important influence in one’s field.



Giampaolo Velo’s cumulative numbers of published papers cited in PubMed, 1968–2017

Giampaolo especially loved two places, Verona and the magnificent village of Erice, which sits above the town of Trapani on top of a mountain about 750 metres above sea level in the north-west corner of Sicily.



Erice's Castelo di Venere, commemorating Aphrodite

Erice played a major part in Giampaolo's life. Originally a religious settlement, with monasteries named after such saints as Rocco, Francesco, and Domenico, it later became the site of a major conference centre, currently covering 126 physical and biological sciences. The Ettore Majorana Foundation and Centre for Scientific Culture was founded in Erice in 1961 by a group of physicists, led by Antonino Zichichi; they named it after the brilliant Italian physicist Ettore Majorana, who was born in Sicily in 1906 and disappeared mysteriously in 1938 [3].



The via Gian Filippo Guarnotti in Erice; the Ettore Majorana Foundation, where Giampaolo held his meetings, is on the left just before the arch (see <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2016/05/27/jeffrey-aronson-when-i-use-a-word-errors>)

From 1976 Giampaolo Velo, in collaboration with Pietro Benigno, Luciano Rausa, and Derek A. Willoughby, led the pharmacology school in Erice, holding regular courses and conferences in most years, sometimes two a year, starting with one on the problems in reviewing marketed medicinal products [4]; he has now been succeeded in that role by his colleague Pietro Minuz. I attended several of his conferences, enjoying both the science and Giampaolo's wonderful hospitality, which always included Marsala and Sicilian cakes on the opening evening and a visit to a site of historical interest on the final day. I was privileged to have organized three conferences with him, two on medication errors (2008 and 2016; <https://www.eacpt.eu/medical-errors-in-erice-sicily-02-05-06-05-2016>) and one on the future of European clinical pharmacology (2012), with ensuing publications [5,6]. Giampaolo's interests were eclectic; two meetings that I particularly remember were individually devoted to ecopharmacology and nutraceuticals. The most influential publication that proceeded from Giampaolo's Erice meetings was the 1997 Erice Statement, which dealt with effective communication in pharmacovigilance [7,8,9] and led to further statements and reports [10,11]. In September 2017 Giampaolo's colleagues held a symposium in Erice in his memory on the subject of eicosanoids.

Giampaolo's love of fast cars was another feature of his ebullient personality. In the picture below we see him in his Gioiello (jewel) and one suspects that his purchase of an Alfa Romeo Giulietta was partly inspired by homage to his wife Giulia.



Giampaolo Velo Born Padua, 30 April 1943; died Verona 17 August 2017. He leaves his wife Giulia, a son, Stefano, and two daughters, Stefania and Elisabetta. We have lost a great supporter of clinical pharmacology, but most of all we have lost a dear friend.

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