

In memoriam

[Translated article] Dr. Joseph Milic-Emili (1931–2022)

David Ramos Barbón

Servicio de Neumología, Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain



Joseph Milic-Emili, “Milic”, was a leading figure in respiratory physiology whose works have been studied by all practicing pulmonologists since their university days. Milic was the embodiment of a golden age of respiratory research that spans from the discoveries of John Hutchinson to the relatively recent introduction of molecular and cellular biology and immunobiology. While he may not have been the very last great pioneer of respiratory physiology, there is little doubt that he was included among this illustrious company. The insights and principles established during this era of translational research have been far more important to the practice of respiratory medicine than the discovery of the structure of DNA, even though this particular path has not been strewn with Nobel prizes. We avail ourselves of this knowledge almost every minute of our clinical practice, often unawares. Milic’s contributions are summarized in an obituary published by the ERS.¹ To give just one significant example emerging from the recent

tumult of experiences that have accompanied the COVID-19 crisis, Milic established the principle that pronation of ventilated patients favors gas exchange.

A holder of 5 honorary doctorates, not least from the University of Kunming, China, Milic was known and admired around the world. There is no evidence that he was ever a member of SEPAR, but he had a personal subscription to *Archivos de Bronconeumología*, which he duly received at his most recent and longest institutional post, the Meakins-Christie Laboratories at McGill University, Montreal, of which he was director from 1979 to 1994. He would pick up our very own journal from his mailbox with a gesture of delight and a remark about its importance to him. Fondly remembered for the many different facets of his academic and personal life, there is one aspect of Milic’s personality that many find surprising: he was a comedian, an entertainer with a mordant sense of humor. With the defense of my doctoral thesis fast approaching, and seeing my inevitably troubled expression, Milic sized me up with a frown. His diagnosis? “You have *facies examinandi*”. I can still hear him roaring with laughter. Thanks for everything, Milic.

Reference

1. European Respiratory Society 2022. In memoriam: Professor Joseph Milic-Emili. Available from: <https://www.ersnet.org/news-and-features/news/in-memoriam-professor-joseph-milic-emili/>.