

Daniela Parolaro passed away on March 28th in Milan at the age of 72. She was.... How strange it is the use this tense. It seems unbelievable that a person with such vitality and energy had to surrender to disease. But that's what happened and we have to cope with it.

Luckily, she left a strong legacy.

She entered the field of cannabinoid research in the early '90s, immediately after the cloning of the CB₁ receptor. Accordingly, her first paper was on the impact of chronic cannabinoid treatment on CB₁ receptor gene expression in the brain, published in 1994. She joined the International Cannabinoid Research Society (ICRS) in 1995, when she attended her first ICRS conference. It was held in Scottsdale, and there she started building links with many colleagues in the field.

She was an active member of the Society until her retirement in 2015. She acted as President in 2006 and she organized the unforgettable 2014 ICRS conference in Baveno, Italy. She was also the recipient of the 2020 Mechoulam Award from the ICRS for outstanding achievements in cannabinoid research. Moreover, she was a past chair of the International Association for Cannabinoid Medicines (IACM; she was elected in 2013). After her retirement she did not rest, but she devoted all her energy to the management of the Fondazione Zardi-Gori, an Italian foundation on drug dependence, where she acted as Scientific Director. She used the Foundation's resources to provide grants or fellowships to young researchers, to support their career development. She also funded awards for the best poster or oral communication presented by young people at several conferences, and she always wanted to have her picture taken with them. It is nice to think that they will take care of that picture with "la prof", as they called her. Indeed, mentorship has always been one of her main priorities. She was able to understand a person at first glance, and seldom was she wrong.

In her long and impressive career, she studied the molecular underpinnings of chronic exposure to opioid and cannabinoid compounds. Regarding cannabinoids, she was very productive in the research regarding long-lasting effects of THC exposure during adolescence. However, drug dependence was not her only field of investigation. She was among the first researchers to understand the relevance of cannabidiol in the cancer field. She also explored the impact of the modulation of the endocannabinoid system in several brain disorders such as anxiety, schizophrenia, depression. In the very last years she focused her attention on the possible exploitation of the phytocannabinoid cannabidivarin in the treatment of cognitive deficits and other behavioral impairments present in disorders showing overlaps or belonging to the autism spectrum disorders.

Besides being a great and passionate scientist, Daniela was also a kind friend for several researchers in the cannabinoid field. The gatherings at conferences were always an occasion for her to develop new friendships, as her smile and open nature attracted people. Every person who had the opportunity to meet Daniela will surely keep a memory of her to fill the void she left.

Dr. Tiziana Rubino
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DELL'INSUBRIA