

# In memoriam: Attilio Maseri (1935–2021)

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Prof. Attilio Maseri passed away on 3 September. Born in Udine, he graduated from Padua in 1960, immediately moving to Pisa, where he obtained the Specialty in Cardiology (1963) and Nuclear Medicine (1968). In the meanwhile, he worked as a Research Fellow at the Columbia University (1965) and at the Johns Hopkins University (1966) in the USA. In 1967, he became Assistant in the Medical Clinic of the University of Pisa, with Gabriele Monasterio as his mentor, and Head of the 'Coronary Division', the research group particularly dedicated to coronary artery disease of the Institute of Clinical Physiology of the CNR founded and directed by Prof. Luigi Donato. In 1979, he became Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School of the University of London and Director of Cardiology at Hammersmith Hospital. In 1991, he returned to Italy as Professor of Cardiology at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome and Director of Cardiology at the Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic. From 2001 to 2008, he was Professor of Cardiology at the Vita-Salute San Raffaele University and Director of the Cardio-Thoracic and Vascular Department at the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan. Since 2008 he has been president of the 'Foundation for Your Heart' of the National Association of Hospital Cardiologists (ANMCO).

Attilio Maseri has left unforgettable traces and memories in Pisa, where his research on measuring coronary flow with radioisotope methods<sup>1,2</sup> was pioneering, and where he made the first clinical

observations on 'primary angina' his definition of angina pectoris at rest, not caused by exertion but by primary reductions in coronary flow.<sup>3–5</sup> He demonstrated the role of coronary spasm in variant Prinzmetal's angina, also becoming a pioneer in studies with coronary vasodilators and anti-ischaemic drugs.<sup>6,7</sup> Subsequent research in London and Rome characterized the role of inflammation in the evolution of coronary plaque and of ischaemic heart disease, a subject that is still the subject of intense research and clinical results today.<sup>8–10</sup> His other fundamental contributions to cardiology were the characterization and research of the mechanisms of microvascular angina.<sup>11,12</sup>

Attilio Maseri has been awarded prestigious international prizes such as the King Faisal International Prize in Medicine, the Distinguished Scientist Award of the American College of Cardiology, the Gold Medal of the European Society of Cardiology, the Grand Prix scientifique de la Fondation Lefoulon-Delalande and the 'Order of Merit', later Knight of the Grand Cross of the Italian Republic, Gold medal for the meritorious of Science and Culture, Gold medal for the meritorious of Health, of the Italian Republic. Pope John Paul II awarded him the title of Commander of the Knights of the Order of St. Gregory the Great. He worked together with Antonio L'Abbate, Carlo Contini, and Giorgio Baroldi, and his direct students in Pisa were in those years the professors Filippo Crea, Mario Marzilli, Paolo Camici, Claudio Brunelli, Raffaele De Caterina, Sergio Chierchia, Alessandro Distanti, Oberdan Parodi, Antonio Pesola, Silvia Severi, and Andrea Biagini, all of whom became Professors of Cardiology in various Italian universities, or Directors of Cardiology Divisions of Italian Hospitals or at the Italian National Research Council Institute of Clinical Physiology. Professor Maseri has been a mentor and a model for many cardiologists and cardiovascular researchers, with unanimously recognized leadership skills in motivating research based on clinical observations. In his students is living the memory of a person of great elegance and generosity. In 2013, he donated the historic Florio library to the University of Udine, containing over 12 000 volumes, brochures, printed works, and manuscripts collected from the mid-eighteenth century. In 2018, he donated, again to the University of Udine, the historic Palazzo Antonini, former headquarters of the Bank of Italy, a building of absolute artistic prestige in the centre of the Friulian city, entirely designed by Andrea Palladio; following the donation, the building was entitled

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Palazzo Antonini-Maseri. Professor Maseri always referred to his period in Pisa as to the happiest of his professional and private life. The Institute of Clinical Physiology, now directed by Giorgio Iervasi, the University Cardiology Division, directed by Raffaele De Caterina and the Fondazione Toscana Gabriele Monasterio where I work with Claudio Passino, Sergio Berti, and our younger collaborators, sons and nephews of the original Maseri's experience, are deeply indebted with his living lesson of a translational research entirely dedicated to the patient. We have personal experience of his strength, and enthusiasm towards research and his achievement accompanied by the wisdom and vision that made him one of the most distinguished cardiologists and personalities of his generation.

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