

Professor Antonio Cao: A Remembrance

When I received Prof. Antonio Cao's acceptance letter to his Centro Microcitemico at Cagliari University, I presumed that it was ushering in a new age in my life about the "molecular genetics of thalassemia in Turkish patients".

I met Prof. Cao on a very hot August day in Cagliari/Sardinia and the year was 1984. I was the first Turkish researcher accepted to the Thalassemia Center. He welcomed me and introduced me to Mario Pirastu, who had recently returned from Y.W. Kan's laboratory in the United States and had created a new method for the identification of mutations in the beta-globin gene with usage for prenatal diagnosis [1].

In Sardinia, I had the chance to experience the establishment of a new molecular genetics laboratory and publish the first paper on the thalassemia mutations in a Turkish population [2].

Later on, I visited the center several times. Always I appreciated the sincerity of the Sardinians and I accepted Cagliari as my 'second city'.

Prof. Cao's center was an "International Thalassemia School". Afterwards, several Turkish researchers visited the center and contributed to the molecular genetics of thalassemia in our population [3]. He created an algorithm to solve the thalassemia problem in Sardinia. This contribution helped in managing the thalassemia problem in different populations (Figure).

He had over 300 publications, mainly on different types of thalassemia and their molecular genetics. His group also contributed to the understanding of the molecular genetics of Wilson's disease, especially in the Mediterranean area and including the Turkish population [4].

After his retirement, and even after his death, his scientific contributions continued [5].

Prof. Antonio Cao passed away last year, on 12 June 2012. His contribution to the thalassemia field and to Turkish researchers will always be remembered.

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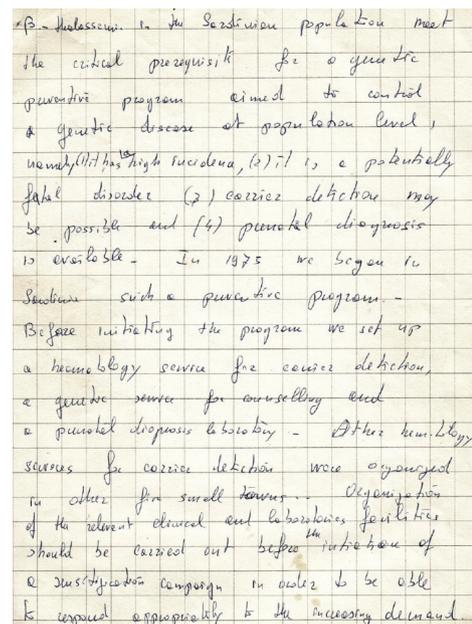


Figure 1: Prof. A. Cao's handwriting, describing the algorithm for managing the thalassemia problem in Sardinia (Ankara, 1987)

References

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3. Sozuoz A, Berkalp A, Figus A, Loi A, Pirastu M, Cao A. Beta thalassemia mutations in Turkish Cypriots. J Med Genet 1988;25:766-768.
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