

In Memoriam
André Kahn



Professor André Kahn abruptly died on September 1, 2004, in Brussels, Belgium, short of his 61st birthday.

André was a close friend whom I met when he was a young physician looking for answers to the ‘apparent life-threatening event’ (ALTE) presented by his very young daughter. He had known the terrible anxiety of having to perform resuscitation maneuvers on his own child, and he wanted to know the status of research on infant apnea during sleep. I could only outline the many unknowns on the subject, but he readily took the challenge.

André had always one goal in his life: to become a physician. Initially forced to enter engineering school to take over the direction of his family’s enterprise, he finally succeeded in convincing his family of his goal and entered medical school at the University Libre de Bruxelles. He was given a Doctorate in Medicine with highest honors in 1975 and finished his specialty in Pediatrics in 1978.

Thereafter he presented an exemplary academic career. He was named ‘Adjoint Principal to the Medical Directorate of the new Children’s University Hospital Reine Fabiola’ in 1986, having been recognized as a quality teacher and gifted administrator. He became chairman of Pediatrics at the Children’s University Hospital Reine Fabiola and Director of Pediatric training for the University in 1996. In 2000, he added the responsibility of Director of Pediatric training for the Flemish Vrije Universiteit Brussel. He became tenured full professor in 2003 and was selected as President for the Pediatric specialty training in June 2003.

André received many academic awards and recognitions for his research work. In 1983, he received the Foundation Henri de Kerckeer Award, he received the European Community Award for Medical Research in 1986, and he received the Annenberg Foundation (USA) Award for his

contributions to the understanding of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in 1998. In June 2001, he was awarded for his work on SIDS with an ‘honoris-causa’ doctorate from the Tokyo Women’s Medical University. He was elected an honorific member by many scientific societies, including the European Society for Pediatric Research in 1998 and the Association Latino Americana de Pediatria in 2000.

He contributed to 180 articles published in international peer-reviewed journals focusing mostly on the understanding of SIDS, but this publication list does not fully impart the important role that André held in Europe and throughout the world. He trained many young individuals from all five continents in pediatrics and pediatric research.

André was instrumental in the development of monitoring systems aimed at the investigation and surveillance of infants at home. The ‘Alice 1’ and ‘Alice 2’ systems were conceived with his support, and he continued to keep an interest in the practical developments of monitoring and recording systems for infants and children during wake and sleep.

André led and supported many national and international initiatives to fight SIDS. He initiated the Royal Decree on the creation of SIDS centers in 1991 and the Royal Decree on autopsies for sudden death in infants in Belgium. He also initiated and coordinated campaigns for the prevention of infantile death and SIDS, obtaining support from Œuvre Nationale pour l’Enfance, ASTRA foundation, and the Belgium Ministry for Social Affairs and Public Health from 1993 to 1996 and from 1999 to 2003.

He was a member of the National Consultatif Committee on ‘The rights of the child’, and he was the initiator and president of the section ‘The rights of the hospitalized child’ for the ‘Right of the child’ national commission. He was selected as an expert to the World Health Organization (WHO) on ‘noise and sleep in children’.

Such expertise landed him on the councils of scientific advisory boards of many organizations, from companies such as Procter & Gamble or Pasteur-Merieux to the European Community on the Biomedicine and Health Research Program, to the International Association of Pediatric Sleep Research and Medicine, and to the ‘Œuvre Nationale de l’Enfance’.

He was an associate editor for the journals *Sleep*, *Sleep Medicine*, *Sleep Medicine Reviews* and the *European Journal of General Medicine*. He was also a member of the editorial boards for *Sleep* (since 1990), the *European Journal of Public Health*, the *Journal of SIDS and Infant Mortality*, the *European Journal of Pediatrics*, and the *Journal of Sleep Research*. In addition, he was a regular reviewer for many international journals.

André was a co-founder of many research associations, including Groupe d'Etude de Langue Française sur la Mort Subite du Nourrisson (1980), Association pour la Prévention de la Mort Subite du Nourrisson (1981), the Pediatric Sleep Study Group of the American Sleep Research Society (1990), the SIDS Europe Federation (1990), the European Society for the Study and Prevention of Infant Death (1990), the European Club for Pediatric Sleep Studies (1992), the European Pediatric Wake-up Club for Methodology and Evaluation of Arousal Mechanisms in Children (1999), and the Task Force of Pediatric Arousals of the Japan SIDS Research Society (2002).

At time of his death André had been nominated as chairman of the scientific committee for the SIDS International Conference to be held in Japan in 2006. He had been putting the last touch on the International

Symposium to be held in January 2005 in Brussels on 'Infant self resuscitation from hypoxia'. He had also planned to help launch the International Association for Pediatric Sleep Research, with support from different pediatric sleep researchers from all over the world, having already worked out the many obstacles associated with such a move with the help of Dr Olivero Bruni.

This is a very short summary of André Kahn's national and international activities. For me and for many of his colleagues and research acquaintances, André was not only a great mentor but also a very good friend, a warm and friendly individual, who, with his smile and open attitude, offered the best of himself to others. An athletic man, he was also an expert in karate, with a black belt and having attained 5th Dan. This gentleman, this academician in the noblest sense of the term, this highly praised physician and researcher, will be greatly missed by everybody in the field of sleep medicine.

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