

Obituary

In memoriam: Professor Mauro Mancia

Mauro Mancia, a brilliant man who excelled in the sleep research area, passed away on July 24, 2007. He was 78.

Mancia was born in 1929, in Fiuminata, a small town in the central part of Italy.

He graduated *summa cum laude* in Medicine at the University of Rome in 1953. His career spanned more than 50 years. He started his work on spinal cord functions with Torsten Wiesel at Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, and in the second half of the 1950s Mancia trained in neurophysiology with Giuseppe Moruzzi. Mancia's training with Moruzzi took place at the University of Pisa, which at that time was in the forefront of scientific research and was one of the most prominent sleep and EEG laboratories in Europe. The laboratory in Pisa was regularly attended by a group of young and older European and American researchers, including some eminent Nobel Prize winners. While in Pisa, Mancia focused on thalamocortical synchronizing circuits, caudal brain stem influences on sleep, and reticular integration of sensory afferents. In 1959, he arrived at the University of California in Los Angeles and he met Francois Michel, who was at that time a close collaborator of Dr. Jouvet. Mancia and Michel discussed a "mysterious" behavioral condition in animals: it was a kind of sleep whose characteristic features were paradoxically similar to wakefulness, except the animal was behaviorally asleep. In Los Angeles, Mancia studied the centrifugal control of olfactory neurons by brain-stem reticular structures under the supervision of Horace Magoun. After his experience at UCLA, Mancia started his own neurophysiology laboratory at the University of Milan, and in the same period he conducted cooperative studies on sleep physiology in monkeys at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi.

Mancia gave sleep neurophysiology a boost by showing the interactions between the brainstem, thalamus, and preoptic area. Among the theoretical and experimental contributions he made to sleep physiology, one of particular interest is his study of the linkage between mesencephalic and bulbo-pontine reticular structures

and the evaluation of brain stem reticular effects on intralaminar thalamic neurons.

From the mid-seventies, always at the State University of Milan, Mancia directed an interdisciplinary group devoted to the neuroanatomical study of brain structures involved in sleep control (mainly at the basal forebrain/anterior hypothalamic level), and sleep neurochemistry/neuropharmacology (the role of muscarinic receptors in the control of sleep), as well as sleep neuroimmunology (the relationship between cytokines and traditional neurotransmitters). Scientists who trained with Mauro Mancia in the past have active collaborations with several top academic institutions, such as Harvard, McGill, UCLA, University of Texas Southwestern, University of Michigan, and University of Wisconsin.

In 1996, Mancia was one of the founding members and the first President of the Italian Sleep Research Society. In 2003, during the APSS meeting in Chicago dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the discovery of REM sleep, Mauro Mancia received from the Sleep Research Society the Jubilee Award as one of the significant early contributors to the foundation of sleep science. Mancia published more than 200 scientific papers.

In addition to being a neurophysiologist, Mauro Mancia was also a psychoanalyst. In the seventies he trained with such key psychoanalysts as Franco Fornari in Milan and Donald Meltzer in London. As a psychoanalyst, Mancia carried out intense clinical activity and supervised several colleagues, becoming a training analyst of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society in the mid-1990s. Mancia contributed to the growth of psychoanalytic theory with several papers published in international journals. In 1988 he published the paper, "The dream as religion of the mind," in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* which proposed, on the basis of clinical findings, a revision of Freud's theory of dreams. Moreover, Mancia's work centered on the theoretical-clinical aspects of narcissism and memory and its relationship with the unconscious. In the last years, he focused on the evaluation of dream between neuroscience and psychoanalysis.

Being both a neurophysiologist and a psychoanalyst was probably the most striking feature of Mancia's personality. This rare combination allowed him to talk about the brain and mind with full knowledge of both. Recent developments in the field of neuroscience such as the discovery of mirror neurons (and of brain systems for the internal representation of actions and states of others) validated Mancia's insightful commitment to integrating neuroscience and psychoanalysis, a commitment which was always the core of his scientific investigation.

Mancia also successfully integrated his scientific work and a profound interest in music and figurative arts. He was a friend of some of the most important Italian con-

temporary artists, whose paintings are collected in his Milan home.

The remarkable personality of Mauro Mancia will forever remain in the memory of his family, friends, colleagues and trainees.

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