Gérald Devuyst (1966–2007)

Dr. Gérald Devuyst passed away on January 16, 2007, three months after his 40th birthday and after several years of an extraordinarily courageous fight against a terrible disease that usually kills within a few months. Despite his young age, Gérald had already become an internationally recognized and respected figure in the field of clinical stroke, and a world expert in Doppler ultrasound assessment of brain circulation.

Gérald was born on October 4, 1966, in Namur. He graduated in medicine with 'Grande Distinction' from the Catholic University of Louvain, in Belgium, in 1991, and was certified in neurology in 1996 in Brussels, again with 'Grande Distinction' after obtaining the 1995 Young Investigator Award at the 4th European Stroke Conference, in Bordeaux. His interest in cerebral circulation gained him research fellowships with Bernd Ringelstein in Münster, Paul-André Despland in Lausanne, Charles Tegeler in Winston-Salem, and Merrill Spencer in Seattle, where he trained in cervical color Duplex and transcranial Doppler, as well as in functional neurosonology. His technical skills, his scientific approach, his enthusiasm for research and clinical care, and his gentleness and collegiality were so obvious to everyone that, in 1997, I flew over to Brussels to convince Gérald to join our stroke team in Switzerland. I thought that his exceptional talents would continue to develop for the benefit of both our clinical and research groups. After consulting with his wife, Christine, Gérald accepted the offer. This was his start to nearly 10 years of thriving activity as chief of the neurosonology laboratory and head of the clinical cerebrovascular unit in the Lausanne University Hospital, earning him an academic professorship in 2002. In a

short time, Gérald made several outstanding contributions to the stroke field, including the first prospective follow-up evaluation of a large series of stroke patients after patent foramen ovale closure, the development of an automatic system for the classification of gaseous and solid microembolic signals by wavelet representation combined with dual-gate transcranial Doppler, and ultrasound measurement of the fibrous cap in symptomatic and asymptomatic carotid atheromatous lesions. In his 54 peer-reviewed articles, Gérald also addressed issues as

varied as cognitive dysfunction after carotid interventions, prodromal stroke seizures, the reperfusion syndrome after revascularization procedures, stroke patterns associated with diabetes mellitus, and stroke and TIA subtypes with basilar artery occlusion or stenosis, a paper which today remains the main reference on this subject.

During these years, Gérald was the recipient of grants from the Swiss National Research Foundation, the most recent in 2006 for transcranial Doppler monitoring during acute stroke. He also obtained a major grant from the Swiss government for a Swiss-French telemedicine project developed together with Thierry Moulin in Besançon. His major achievement was his project on 'Emboli Detection and Neuroprotection during Cardiac and Carotid Surgery', which ranked first in a large contest involving the University of Geneva, the University of Lausanne, and the Federal School of Engineering, which awarded Gérald a grant of 1 million Swiss francs and led to several publications and technical licensing.

Gérald was an excellent teacher. His former fellows from Italy, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Belgium, Turkey, Georgia, Brazil, South Korea, North Korea and Japan paid regular visits to him just before or after European Stroke Conferences, in which he involved himself very much year after year in parallel with his duties on the

board of Cerebrovascular Diseases for 4 years. In addition to his professional expertise, Gérald was indeed the kindest man; I have never met anyone who did not like and respect him, also during the fiercest competitions. Without doubt, Gérald was destined to be elected to the highest academic responsibilities. As a leader, he established a tight and effective team of technicians, nurses, residents and researchers, where everyone felt in the right place and collaborated with enthusiasm and pleasure in his projects. His sense of humour and superloud laughs were legendary, with a contagious 'good mood', which remained present until his very last days. Gérald really was what can sometimes – though too rarely – be called an 'example' ... an example of professional excellence but, beyond this, an example of loyalty and friendship, and an example of what life can be, even when dramatically challenging and frightening due to an irreversible disease. His colleagues and his friends – and I am sure his young son, Roman – will always remember this and Gérald's example. Gérald really was a beautiful person.

For he being dead, with him is beauty slain
William Shakespeare

Julien Bogousslavsky