

André Lussier

By Henri Ménard, MD

Our colleague and friend, André Lussier, a prominent rheumatologist and emeritus professor at the *Université de Sherbrooke*, passed away on July 21 at the age of 76. He died peacefully at the *Maison Aube-Lumière* in Sherbrooke, following a valiant battle with cancer. He was a builder who vigorously dedicated his life to developing the discipline of rheumatology in Estrie, Quebec, Canada and the world.

After his studies in internal medicine at the *Université de Montréal*, André completed his education at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia under Joe Hollander's tutelage. There, André collaborated with Dan McCarty on the first projects involving the composition of normal and pathologic synovial fluid liquid, identification of biologically significant microcrystals via polarized light microscopy, and microcrystalline arthritis. He pursued this interest throughout his career at the *Université de Sherbrooke* with his loyal collaborator, Rinaldo De Medicis. André's achievements include:

- Establishing the first Rheumatic Disease Unit (RDU) at the *Université de Sherbrooke* in Quebec (the second in Canada after the unit at the University of Toronto, founded by Metro Ogryzlo). He masterfully managed the unit from 1969 to 1984. During his first mandate as Director of the RDU, he helped pave the road leading to the *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Sherbrooke* (CHUS), emulating the time's pioneering spirit.
- Having rheumatology recognized as a medical specialization by the *Collège des Médecins du Québec* and, a few years later, by the Royal College of Physicians of Canada.
- The revival of the *Conférence laurentienne de rhumatologie* (Laurentian Rheumatology Conference) in the 1970s, in collaboration with the late Roger Demers.
- The creation of the CHUS Clinical Research Centre with his friends Bernard Bénard and Étienne Lebel, where André was the inaugural Scientific Director.
- Serving as President of the Canadian Rheumatology Association and the Pan American League Against Rheumatism (PANLAR) Conference held in Montreal in the early 1990s.

He focused his research on adjuvant arthritis in rats, through which he explored the underlying reasons for the clinical observation of a mutual exclusion of gout and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). This observation remains as yet



André, pictured on April 24 during the celebrations in his honor, is flanked by his colleagues, Louise Rouleau, Jacques Brown, Gilles Boire, Victor Radoux, Michel Gagné, Angèle Turcotte, Jean-Pierre Mathieu and François Couture.

unexplained. He built an international reputation by participating in Phase I and Phase II clinical studies on the revolutionary drugs of his time: non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). He honed the study of digestive micro-bleeding by labelling red blood cells with radioactive chromium with Étienne Lebel. This proved to be a very productive initiative, given that it was an inevitable side effect from NSAIDs. As a result, André published a not very well-known but fascinating study on the placebo/nocebo effect, and the definition of a control group. In essence, using medical students as a control group in a digestive micro-bleeding study is not always a good choice, especially if it's during their exam period. In addition, the placebo/nocebo effect is only psychic: micro-bleeding progressively increases, from the healthy subject who isn't taking anything at all, to the healthy subject who is taking a placebo NSAID, to the subject who is taking a real NSAID.

André leaves behind his extraordinary wife Denise and three children, all accomplished professionals—Yves, Sylvie and Isabelle—as well as their families. His five adored grandchildren will miss him tremendously. Several rheumatologists, who trained at Sherbrooke, recently gathered to pay tribute to him. The André Lussier Rheumatology Research Chair was created in his honor by the *Université de Sherbrooke* Foundation. Donations can be sent to the JS Bourque Pavilion, Sherbrooke, QC, J1K 2R1 or online at <http://relationsdiplomes.usherbrooke.ca>.

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