

# Adieu Andrzej, tu nous manqueras pour toujours...

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I was reading through my e-mails, as I do everyday, when I came across the incredible news: "Professor Andrzej Szczeklik died this morning". I could not believe what I was reading as he was so fit and so active. I met him recently and he seemed in very good health, but I shortly received several other e-mails confirming this very sad news. I then started to think about how much I would miss him.

Andrzej was the prototype of a gentleman. He was extremely well educated, and one of his most important publications was the book *Catharsis: on the Art of Medicine*. This book "was the exciting product of an erudite physician who is sensitive to the nuances of his profession and to its ancient humanistic origins".<sup>1</sup> He was fluent in French and this is why I have written the title in this language.

However, I would like to give you my personal view on this unique human being. In the late 1970s, when no one was speaking about Polish medicine (not even *Allergology*), I read a remarkable paper on aspirin hypersensitivity that had been published in the *British Journal of Medicine*.<sup>2</sup> This paper was very interesting and innovative as it showed that aspirin – but not all non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs – could induce asthma. He was even suggesting prostaglandins as a putative mechanism. That same year, he published a paper in *Nature*.<sup>3</sup> I then became very eager to meet this Polish scientist who had produced such important publications. About two years later, I met a very elegant person who was remarkably fluent in both French and English. He was extremely polite and was almost excusing himself for being so brilliant. However, what astonished me more than anything was his persistence in his thinking. He was among the first to understand that tartrazine and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents do not cross-react with aspirin in patients with aspirin-induced asthma. He was fighting "big" names in the US, but his data were absolutely correct. He confirmed his proposals by scientific studies and did so with extreme elegance.<sup>4</sup> He even remained a very good friend of his US colleague who was invited to Krakow for the very last invitation he had in his life.

I think that this story describes Andrzej's behaviour. I know that whilst he was publishing these breakthrough studies he was also deeply involved in the changes that were occurring in Poland. Although he never talked with me about his political involvement, I have been told how important this was at the level of the Krakow University and the entire country.

I had the pleasure of meeting Andrzej many times, especially when he was leading the GA<sup>2</sup>LEN (Global Allergy and Asthma European Network) group in Krakow,<sup>5-9</sup> and I was invited to a symposium this year, which showed that although retired he was still extremely active.

On a more personal standpoint, I would like to tell everyone how Andrzej tried to help everybody, and particularly the young Polish people who were in France during some of the dark days of the Polish history. He really helped and gave extremely important advice. For these people, he was a true hero.

Andrzej, you were one of the very few who will have an impact not only on medicine but, more importantly, on human beings. We shall miss you forever.

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