Umberto Veronesi 1925–2016: obituary

Alberto Costa

Umberto Veronesi passed away on 8 November, after an entire life dedicated to the fight against cancer, to surgery, to advocacy and to research.

He died in peace, fading away with his unique and unforgettable smile, at home in Milan, the city where he was born almost 91 years ago.

His death marks the end of an era.

Umberto was the first to conceive of curing breast cancer without mastectomy, and he did seminal studies on melanoma, sentinel node, intraoperative radiotherapy and chemoprevention of cancer.

He was director of Istituto Tumori in Milan, and later of the European Institute of Oncology, which he conceived and established.

He was founder and president of most of the European scientific societies (surgical oncology, mastology, the Federation of European cancer Societies, FECS, now the European Cancer Organisation (ECCO) as well as president of the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC), the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and many other organisations.

He founded the European School of Oncology in 1982, and dedicated a lot of time and energy to education and teaching.

Declared an ‘honorary woman’ for his attention to women’s rights and for founding Europa Donna, the European Breast Cancer Coalition, he performed thousands of surgical procedures on patients with breast cancer.

Umberto Veronesi was a citizen of the world, but always proud of being Italian, serving his country as Minister of Health and as Senator.

We miss him dreadfully, and we do not yet know how we will keep going without his encouragement, his vision and his incurable optimism.

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