

In ricordo di Jillian (Jill) Tate

Con rammarico e personale dolore comunichiamo alla nostra comunità scientifica che lo scorso 4 Dicembre è mancata una stimata collega e una persona di assoluto valore.

Jill Tate ci ha lasciato all'età di 68 anni dopo una lunga malattia, nonostante la quale ha portato avanti i suoi progetti con la consueta dedizione ed entusiasmo, quasi fino all'ultimo dei suoi giorni.

Jill ha lavorato per molti anni presso il Pathology Queensland Department of Chemical Pathology del Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital di Brisbane (Australia), nell'ultimo periodo come Senior Scientist, apportando durante tutta la sua vita professionale un contributo fondamentale all'avanzamento della Medicina di Laboratorio a livello internazionale.

Durante la sua carriera ha avuto due principali campi di interesse: la diagnostica proteica e le problematiche della standardizzazione e della armonizzazione.

Per la diagnostica proteica, oltre a numerosi e fondamentali contributi sulla standardizzazione e l'utilizzo clinico della misura delle Free Light Chains nelle discrasie plasmacellulari, è necessario ricordare il suo ruolo di coordinatore dell'*Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists' Harmonisation Committee Working Party* che ha consentito, oltre a molte altre importanti iniziative nel campo della armonizzazione in Medicina di Laboratorio, di produrre una raccomandazione sulla standardizzazione del referto della elettroforesi proteica che è stata e continua ad essere il fondamento della operatività di tutti coloro che si occupano di questo settore della diagnostica di laboratorio.

Sempre relativamente alle tematiche della standardizzazione e armonizzazione dobbiamo ricordare la sua importante attività nel campo dei marcatori di danno cardiaco (la troponina I in primis) operando come coordinatore di diversi Gruppi di lavoro di IFCC sul tema e pubblicando lavori fondamentali di riferimento.

In anni più recenti è stata prezioso Editore Associato della rivista *Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine* (CCLM) e dal Gennaio 2018 componente dell'*International Advisory Board* di questa rivista.

Si deve a Jill la progettazione prima e la realizzazione poi del progetto dello *Special Issues* di CCLM dedicato alla armonizzazione in Medicina di Laboratorio: *Harmonization in Laboratory Medicine: the Request, the Sample, the Measurement, and the Report*. Sfortunatamente ha potuto vedere pubblicata solo la prima parte di questo importante progetto, che è stato portato avanti e concluso grazie al suo lavoro ed entusiasmo.

Il tributo più importante che possiamo dedicare a Jill è tuttavia l'apprezzamento e il riconoscimento delle sue qualità umane: il suo approccio gentile e rispettoso alle persone, la sua sensibilità e disponibilità all'ascolto delle opinioni degli altri.

La ricordiamo perciò qui con rispetto e ammirazione sia ai Colleghi che hanno avuto l'onore e il piacere di conoscerla e lavorare con lei, sia ai molti che l'hanno apprezzata attraverso i suoi articoli e la sua attività scientifica che rimangono di assoluto riferimento culturale e professionale per molti di noi.

Maria Stella Graziani
Mario Plebani



Jill Tate: Mentoring as a life legacy

Jillian Russyll Tate died on December 4, 2018, aged 68 years old. When I heard the news, I was saddened and thought the laboratory medicine community lost an important icon of harmonization and standardization of laboratory tests, a task so difficult that many of us shy away from such a herculean effort. Jill Tate was a senior scientist at the Pathology Queensland Department of Chemical Pathology at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital in Brisbane, Australia. Jill has close to 100 peer-reviewed publications available on PubMed. She was a member of the editorial board of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (CCLM) journal and an active member of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry (IFCC) working groups on standardization of reporting assays such as the cardiac troponin, lipoprotein(a) and protein electrophoresis. She was chair of the Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists' Harmonization Committee, working on a range of harmonization activities including common reference intervals, standardized units, terminology and reporting in pathology, and critical laboratory results.

The first time I heard about Jill Tate, it was from a world famous colleague who said Jill was the first person to speak up and publish on the analytical interferences and challenges with free light chain measurement by nephelometry. Jill published a series of articles raising important findings that overall raised awareness of analytical issues and improved the assay, today used to diagnose and monitor monoclonal gammopathies [1-4]. This must have taken courage. She did that on her own, at a time when no one else from large institutions had done similar experiments or challenged the new assay.

I knew one of Jill Tate's many academic interests and that is the passion we shared. A mentor at Mayo Clinic introduced us when we wrote a review for a special issue on CCLM. I first met Jill in Philadelphia at an annual meeting of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC), in August of 2016. Such a kind, smiling lady was in front of me. We had been corresponding via email for a little over a year before we met in person. We went on a walk to a restaurant to have brunch. The restaurant was full and we waited in line for almost an hour until we had a table. We chatted about chemistry in the States, about the Therasol phenomenon and how speaking up about it was perceived, about monoclonal gammopathies current and future states. At the time, we were planning a survey to be submitted to all IFCC laboratories on reporting practices of serum protein electrophoresis, immunofixation and other assays used to diagnose and monitor monoclonal gammopathies. I came back from that meeting with Jill very energized and confident that we were on a mission, and that harmonizing practices to report these assays would be beneficial to physicians, laboratorians and patients worldwide. I was eager to contribute and Jill's enthusiasm on making a difference was contagious.

The survey was submitted to all IFCC laboratories, and when we met for a second time in person, almost a year later in Athens, at Euromedlab in June 2017, it was to analyze the data from the survey results. The questions we had asked made us think of new questions and new challenges to address. We realized the practices vary widely in each country and different sizes of healthcare systems. We concluded that a universal recommendation for reporting a diverse group of tests used for diagnosis and monitoring of a range of pre-malignant and malignant conditions was... simply not possible - when systems unique realities related to technology costs, information delivery to both clinicians and patients and ease of use of such recommendations <http://www.ifcc.org/ifcc-education-division/working-groups-special-projects/wg-icqa/>. I suspect Jill knew from the beginning the size of such a task. I am not sure I did. Jill encouraged me to pursue a specific doubt which arose from that survey, related to the limit of quantitation for monoclonal proteins detected on protein electrophoresis. Although not originally related to reporting, it was somewhat evident that labs had different limits of quantitation for monoclonal proteins, which can impact the follow-up of patients being seen in multiple institutions. This study is still in progress, and perhaps, recognizing differences between methods and institutions may be a path to future standardization.

Jill was a very articulate writer. She was an effective communicator via email. I was impressed by her skills in leading diverse working groups, capacity for decision-making, sound understanding of the issues raised by the group, encouragement and follow-up. Jill lived in Australia, and interacted with peers from Italy, Canada, Germany and the US routinely. Despite the time difference and geographical distance, she was usually the first person to respond to an email from her teammates with guidance. These are not easy responsibilities to accomplish by email. They require servant leadership skills.

Jill was able to put her thoughts and opinions in words and translate them into actions, while taking the groups' directives in mind and without sounding authoritarian, but still setting the tone. She would sound excited and appreciative, and as a member of one of her working groups, I felt safe, since the beginning of times, to express my opinions very candidly to her, and I received the same treatment back with her sincere opinions, unpretentious comments, and the most important of all constructive criticism whenever necessary. That type of wisdom, kindness and genuine mentoring are very hard to come by in the life of a young professional these days.

I met Jill Tate in person only a couple of times in my life, and yet I can truly say that the impact she has had in my career was tremendous. She opened many doors for me, by trusting my input and opinions, being generous with

her support and listening. She welcomed me to her working group and gave me space and time so that my voice was heard. She believed I could do it, something I sometimes still wonder about. She was one of the most humble, enthusiastic and kind people I have met in the field of laboratory medicine, and I'll always be grateful for having had her as a mentor and colleague. She was a living example of the professional I would like to become one day. She always inspired me to go the extra-mile and to pursue the improvements and challenges of our profession that were dear to my heart. In her last email to me, when she already knew she was sick and unable to keep going with her work-related activities, she said "life must go on for people like you. They say, enjoy every day." A simple, humble message, no Hollywood ending to life. I know I am only one of the innumerable people that she mentored throughout her career and that she touched many lives. I hope that we can cherish her memory by passing on what we learned from her, what she inspired us to be. Every day counts, and every day can make a difference. She sparked the fire within me to indeed enjoy life, find purpose in the work I do, and with that help others find their voice and carry on her mentoring legacy.

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