In memory of Professor Pierluigi Cecchi

Since the end of 2019, a sudden outbreak and pandemic of a new infectious disease—coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has spread all over the world, causing serious loss of life and property in many countries. Our distinguished intimate friend from Italy, Professor Pierluigi Cecchi, unfortunately, left this world in this pandemic disaster.

Professor Cecchi was born in Rimini, a beautiful coastal city in northern Italy, in August 1943. He graduated from the University of Bologna (Bologna, Italy) in 1969 and was awarded with a Doctor of Internal Medicine and Surgery. Subsequently, he studied pediatrics, public health, and hygiene and preventive medicine; he received the academic title of Pediatrician-in-chief from the Italian Ministry of Health in 1979. In addition to his native Italian language, he could craftily master English, French, Spanish, and Vietnamese languages. He also had a firm international humanitarian spirit and was committed to improving the medical standards of developing countries. He had traveled to Nicaragua, Zaire, Kenya, Palestine, and Vietnam to aid in maternal and child protection, rehabilitation of malnourished children, special education for disabled children, medical treatment, and other voluntary assistant work. In March 2000, Professor Cecchi and his wife, Rosalba Rondinelli, traveled to Beijing, where he served for four years as the Italian-side leader of the Italian government’s aid to the Beijing Children’s Hospital Intensive Care Medicine Project.

With the arrival of Professor Cecchi, the Sino-Italian Intensive Care Medicine Project was officially implemented. Professor Cecchi first performed on-site inspections and meticulous investigations of relevant departments, as well as had many discussions and exchanges with the emergency centers; he also collected epidemiological statistics, updated and revised previous results, and clarified the developmental needs of each hospital. He worked tirelessly, days and nights. He repeatedly communicated with our institute and finally formulated a new feasibility study report and redrew the project blueprint. During these 4 years, to aid in the development of the pediatric emergency medicine department in our hospital, Professor Cecchi worked closely with colleagues in the hospital to overcome various difficulties and solved both foreseeable and unforeseeable difficulties. With his efforts, the cooperation project has been implemented in a smooth manner; it has improved the level of medical equipment in Beijing Children’s Hospital, optimized the treatment process for children, and expanded the hospital’s management methods while achieving practical improvement in diagnostic capabilities and medical technology.

In the past 4 years, the project led by Professor Cecchi has held 32 training courses and invited 19 experts to give lectures and training, including many experts and scholars from the United States; the participants have included more than 600 pediatricians from many provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions in China. Among the eight life
support training courses that focused on model operation drills, the interactive teaching methods were highly praised by the trainees. In addition, Professor Cecchi conducted training courses in English, which improved the English level of the hospital’s medical staff.

In addition to providing guidance and support for the hospital’s medical emergency projects, Professor Cecchi also worked on clinical training abroad. He funded a total of 33 doctors from Beijing Children’s Hospital to travel to the University Hospital of Bologna, University Hospital of Padua, Florence Mayer Hospital, Rome Jesus Children’s Hospital, and Singapore General Hospital. The emphases of these training efforts involved internal medicine, surgery, emergency medicine, anesthesia, radiology, ultrasound, hospital management, and information technology. Over 1–6 months of study, the medical staff expanded their capabilities in areas such as professional technology and management concepts; they also established a foundation for cooperation with relevant medical institutions. Through these efforts, the people of China and Italy expanded their knowledge in the medical field while deepening the communication and understanding between the people of the two nations.

Thanks to the joint efforts of Professor Cecchi and Beijing Children’s Hospital, the cooperative project has achieved positive results and has been highly valued and recognized by the leaders of both China and Italy. The former Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, the wife of the Prime Minister, relevant officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Chairman of AFMAL-FBF have recently visited our hospital. Leaders of the Beijing Municipal Health Bureau and the leaders of our hospital have also visited Italy in the course of this collaboration. On the basis of this project, Beijing Children’s Hospital signed cooperation agreements with Santo Bono Children’s Hospital in Napoli, Italy, and the Pediatric Department of St. Orsola Hospital in Bologna, Italy, in 2003; these agreements further enhanced personnel communication and improved hospital medical care.

During the course of his life and his work in Beijing Children’s Hospital, Professor Cecchi communicated well with his Chinese colleagues and often devoted his personal time to the discussion and resolution of professional problems with a wide range of people. In May 2004, Professor Cecchi was awarded the status of “Honorary Employee of Beijing Children’s Hospital.”

Professor Cecchi was an excellent envoy to enhance the level of international exchanges in our hospital and promote welcoming interactions between China and Italy. His contributions to the development of our hospital’s medical emergency services and the instruction in key skills are worthy of perpetual gratitude. His diligence, dedication, persistent pursuit of pediatrics, and firm international humanitarian spirit will be treasured for many generations.

We deeply mourn the passing away of the distinguished Italian pediatrician, an intimate friend of Chinese pediatricians, Professor Pierluigi Cecchi, and sincerely cherish the memory of his friendship with our hospital and the Chinese people.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
None.

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