

## *Luigi Di Bella* MD. PhD.

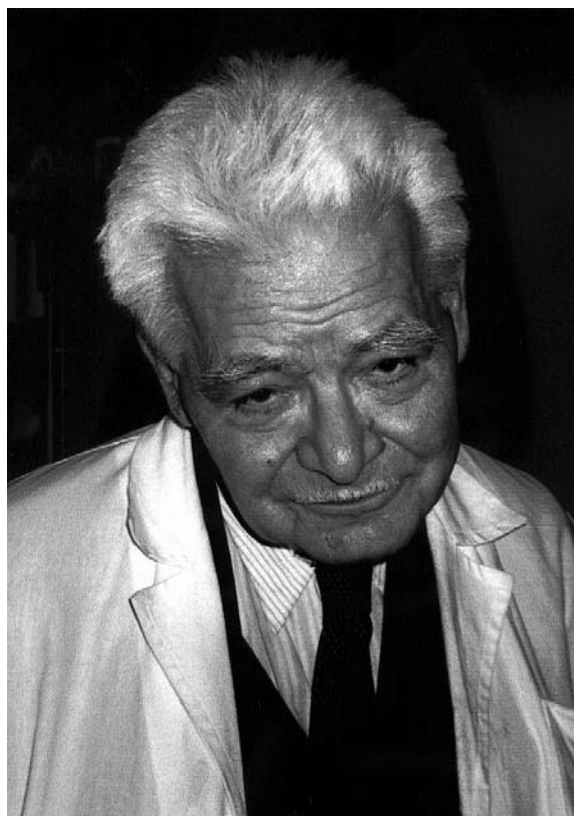
Luigi Di Bella was born on July 17, 1912 at Linguaglossa, a small Sicilian village near Catania (Italy).

So poor was his family that, after completing his secondary education, it was only by virtue of the several scholarships he had won that he could attend the faculty of Medicine at the University of Messina. He was noted and sought after as an intern by Prof. Pietro Tullio, Medicine Nobel prize candidate 1930 and 1932. At age nineteen, Luigi Di Bella associated his name to his master's in his first joint paper, and prior to graduating in 1936, he had already published nine works and won four national contests.

During the Autumn of 1936 he initiated teaching physiology and biochemistry at the University of Parma. In 1937 he was presented with a scholarship by the acclaimed scientist Guglielmo Marconi, then president of CNR (National Research Council). In 1938 he earned his second University degree, in Pharmacology, and the third one, in Chemistry.

With the rank of medical captain, he set off for Greece, where he was in charge of a Military Hospital. He was indefatigable in caring for the patients in his charge. So much so that he was eventually overwhelmed by

the strain and, in 1943, sick with malaria and a severe hepatitis, he had to be discharged. After a brief convalescence, Luigi Di Bella resumed teaching and researching at the University of Modena and had several scientific works published. In the period 1937 through 1948 his name appears on as many as thirty-five papers, a number of which were based on his studies of aneurine, retinoids and on



his research on hypothalamus and pituitary gland functions. In 1948 he won the Human Physiology and Biochemistry professorships. Having to endure hindrance and rivalries in his research effort, he personally designed a private laboratory and went ahead with its construction, occasionally assisted by a few labourers. From 1951 onwards much research work was carried out in this "Private Laboratory of Physiology".

In 1969, after thirty years of research, Luigi Di Bella communicated to a national congress (SIBS) his first findings pointing to an innovative therapy

of haematological pathologies, which he went on to practice with the collaboration of Prof. Edoardo Storti, a prominent haematologist. In December 1973, by invitation of the eminent clinical pathologist Domenico Campanacci, he referred to the Society for Medicine and Surgery of Bologna, on the results of his therapeutic approach, which were more extensively illustrated during the XXVI IUPS Congress 1974 in New Delhi. At the I EPSG Congress of Amsterdam, 1978, he presented a paper (*Perspectives in Pineal Function. Prog Brain Res. 1979; 52:475-478*) outlining the rationale of his method. He further explained his therapeutic proposal in 1980 at the International Symposium on Melatonin in Bremen; at the II International Symposium of Somatostatin 1981 in Athens; in 1987 at the Tuebingen International Workshop (*Melatonin in thrombocytogenesis. In Gupta et al, editors. 1988. p.183-194*), where he met Prof. Derek Gupta.

He coined the definition “Biological Therapy of Tumours”, as opposed to the conventional cyto-toxic, cyto-reductive, tumour-focused treatments. Meanwhile, he continued to examine and treat, always free of charge, literally thousands of patients. In recognition of this professional and ethical endeavour, in January 1990 he was awarded the ‘Goodness Prize’ by the top magistrate in Modena. When he retired from his academic activity, after teaching for forty-six years, Luigi di Bella continued to research at his ‘Private Laboratory of Physiology’ in Modena.

In 1996 he attained a vast fame, which he neither craved nor enjoyed, leading to his treatment of tumours (MDB – Di Bella Method, main components of which are: Somatostatin, Bromocriptine, Retinoids, Vitamin E, Vit. D3, Melatonin) undergoing nationwide clinical trials in 1998. As a result, the Italian health authorities decreed that the MDB was not effective, although the criteria of the trials were deemed questionable by several observers (*Mullner M, BMJ. 1999; 318(7178): 208-209*).

The last months of his lifetime were marred by intense suffering, that however did not prevent him from either attending to the sick or continuing his research work, as testified by the publication of his last paper (*Med Sci Monit. 2002; 8(12): BR 527-531*). His heart ceased to beat on July 1, 2003. His gravesite at Fanano, a small hill town in the Appennines near Modena, has seen a continuous stream of mourners, whether former patients or simple well-wishers. A posthumous review has recently been published by this very journal (*Neuroendocrinol Lett. 2006; 27(4): 425-432*). On Dec. 12, 2006 the Linguaglossa City Council dedicated a square of the town to Luigi Di Bella and laid a commemorative plaque on his birthplace.

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