

Obituary

Pierre M. Montavon (1949–2018)Daniel A. Koch¹ Aldo Vezzoni² Daniel Damur¹¹ Daniel Koch Small Animal Surgery Referrals, Diessenhofen, Switzerland² Veterinary Clinic Vezzoni, Cremona, Italy

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I remember very well a difficult period at the Vetsuisse Faculty University of Zurich, Switzerland, when Pierre Montavon, already Professor of small animal surgery, felt cheated by the board of directors of the faculty. The financial sources were shortened for his clinic and a team room was assigned to another clinic. Pierre took out his pirate flag and it waved from the window of his office for some weeks, demonstrating that he would not accept the decision, but would follow his own way.

The aforementioned situation was typical for Pierre Montavon. Equipped with enormous talent for small animal surgery and a subtle feeling for future trends, he became head and director of a business unit in 1994 and struggled with managing tasks. As long as I worked in his clinic, the top of his desk was covered with hundreds of papers, manuscripts and memos, leaving no doubt about his lack of organizational ability. But this chaos was the melting pot of at least two techniques, which for all time will be Pierre's legacy.

The Zurich cementless hip prosthesis was the result of Pierre Montavon's basic work on canine hip morphology, his staying power when more than half of the first procedures failed and had to be revised, and an exhausting travel activity around the whole world to implement and defend the novel idea of a non-cemented hip prosthesis. Slobodan Tepic and Aldo Vezzoni were his technical and surgical companions on a long way on which most other veterinarians would have retired at the glance of failures, resentment and negative propaganda, even in Switzerland. The second and even more important invention was the tibial tuberosity advancement. In a typical manner, Pierre declared in 2000, that he would never pay for a license and adopt the TPLO technique from the United States, but rather develop something new or better. Within a surprisingly short time of less than 4 months, the TTA became ready for clinical use. I and many former residents at the small animal surgery clinic are still very thankful for this technique and I remember Pierre every time, when a dog comes in for cranial cruciate ligament surgery.

Pierre was a generous leader of his group. He often called it his family. He was delighted and pleased, when we made

progress in our own career, gave good talks or achieved a title. It was therefore not easy for him, when he stepped back from the director's seat in 2012 and tried out a new career in private business. He found freedom in the last years and returned to the place where he had his best performance: in the surgical theater, reconstructing dogs and cats and supporting veterinarians to become better surgeons.

Pierre suffered from a pancreatic carcinoma and passed away on September 7, 2018. He will always be in the heart of those who shared a way with him.

Daniel Koch**Pierre M. Montavon**

Photos courtesy of Dr. Katja Voss.

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I owe Pierre so much. Three great veterinary doctors have marked my professional life, Prof. Renato Cheli, my teacher at the University of Milan, who made me love surgery, Barclay Slocum who fascinated me with his revolution in the treatment of cruciate ligament rupture in dogs and in the understanding of limb alignments as well as in the definition of the evolution of hip dysplasia, and Pierre Montavon for having involved me in the development of Zurich cementless hip prosthesis, to which I have dedicated 20 years of passion and which has radically addressed my scientific and professional activity. Last year I had dedicated to him my goal of 2000 hip prostheses performed, because he was able to fascinate me with this new hip prosthesis and helped me in the first steps, opening up a new world.

Pierre, sometimes, had a difficult and categorical character, but he knew how to understand colleagues in difficulty by doing everything possible to help them, and above all, he worked to develop professionally and scientifically the young veterinarians who turned to him, without preclusions.

Thanks Pierre, I will never forget you!

Aldo Vezzoni

Pierre was a great veterinary surgeon, an excellent teacher and a good friend. It was his professional duty to teach students, give his experience to young veterinarians and find solutions for orthopaedic problems of cats and dogs.

I had the opportunity to be resident under Pierre's supervision. It was a very intensive time period of my life. Pierre was supportive, but he expected full professional commitment and full loyalty.

He was confident to send the young residents to conferences and seminars for presentations and for participation in courses around the globe to spread his ideas and his techniques.

Pierre always gave the credits to his collaborators and treated them as part of his family.

His character did not allow any compromises and therefore, he sometimes affronted colleagues and friends.

Pierre will leave a big gap in the veterinary community.

Daniel Damur