Editorial

Marc Tardieu—Recipient of the Honorary Award 2019

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During the Neurowoche in Berlin in November 2019, the Honorary Award of the German speaking Child Neurology Society, sponsored by Thieme, was presented to Prof. Dr. Marc Tardieu.

Born in Paris in 1949, Marc Tardieu qualified as physician in 1975, as pediatrician in 1979, and then spent 2 years (1980–82) specializing in neurovirology at Harvard Medical School. During this time period, he was also working at immunology and virology laboratories in France, Belgium, and Canada. Back in Paris, he was working as a neuropediatrician at the Hôpitaux Universitaires Paris Sud where he became Chef de Clinique Assistant en Neuropédriatrie and Chef de service de Neurologie pédiatrique in 1996. He also headed the INSERM (Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale) neurovirology research unit (1982–92) and the neurovirology and immunology laboratory (1992–96) at the Paris Sud Medical School. He received numerous awards, such as the Prime d’excellence scientifique (2006–2009, renouvelée 2010–2014), the Chevalier des palmes académiques (2013), and the McKeith Guest conference British Pediatric neurology association (2014), and he is honorary member of the European Pediatric Neurology society. Furthermore, Tardieu has served on the scientific committees of patient groups focused on Rett’s syndrome, opsoclonus–myoclonus syndrome, and lysosomal diseases, and others.

In Berlin, Marc presented his study about intracerebral gene therapy in mucopolysaccharidosis IIIB showing that early treatment may offer the option of a disease course which is close to normal development. In the presented study, published in the Lancet Neurology, 2017, four patients, aged 20, 26, 30, and 53 months, were treated with intraparenchymal applicated adenoassociated viral vector serotype two-five (rAAV2/5) encoding human α-N-acetylgalactosaminidase (NAGLU) plus immunosuppressive therapy. The intracerebral gene therapy was well tolerated and induced sustained enzyme production in the brain. Compared with the natural history of mucopolysaccharidosis type III, neurocognition improved in all patients, with the youngest patient having function close to that in healthy children. Prof. Tardieu, therefore, addressed a subject at the edge of a historical breakthrough; gene therapy has found its way into neuropaediatrics and early treated patients may have tremendous benefit.

However, it would not be adequate to reduce the scientific success of Marc Tardieu to this important study. His group was the first one isolating human microglial cells identifying their role in brain lesions in children with human immunodeficiency virus 1 (HIV-1). In herpes-related encephalitis he identified the role of gene polymorphism of the interferon-1 pathway. He was helping to found the International Pediatric Multiple Sclerosis Group providing internationally accepted definitions of multiple sclerosis as a basic for large multicenter therapy studies that he was initiating and participating in.

Marc Tardieu is an exceptional scientist; he is an advocate for his patients and also is appreciated as an excellent teacher. Therefore, it is not surprising that the audience of the ceremony session, listening to a tremendous talk, was deeply impressed by his academic and pure personality. It is an honor to welcome Prof. Marc Tardieu as an awardee.