

EDITORIAL

Increasing awareness of Myology: it's time for its recognition as an independent discipline within the Medical Sciences

In 1891, Charcot and Bouchard – two eminent French scientists – published a famous textbook of Internal Medicine (1), which included large chapters dedicated to all branches of Medicine and Neurology. The medical specialties, as we know them today, are all derived from the Internal Medicine during the 19th century. J.M. Charcot, who first argued the need for a specialist to direct the Chair of Mental Disorders at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, performed all necessary steps – scientific, institutional and political – to claim and obtain for himself the creation of the first Chair of Nervous and Mental Diseases of the Old Continent in 1882 (2, 3). The same fate befell during the 20th century in other disciplines, such as Cardiology, Endocrinology, Gastroenterology, Pulmonology etc. just to mention the most important, and, more recently, Microbiology, Hygiene, Genetics, ... and Myology.

Myology (from *latin myos* “muscle” and *logia*, “logy”) is the science that studies muscles, their physical structure, type of fibers, specific function, and the connections between different muscle groups. Interest of myology are also muscle disorders. For most of the 20th century, Myology was considered as a little part of Neurology, while currently it is recognized as an autonomous discipline both at the research and the medical level.

From a research point of view, we have witnessed the birth and flourishing of new scientific societies, such as the European Society for Muscle Research (1970), the Mediterranean Society of Myology (1993), the World Muscle Society (1995), the Institute of Myology (1996), the Italian Association of Myology (2000), the British Myology Society (2009), the French Society of Myology (2011), and numerous conferences concerning muscular disorders. In particular the annual meetings of the World Muscle Society and Italian Association of Myology have been this year at their 20th and 15th edition, respectively, while the biannual meeting of the Mediterranean Society of Myology will see its 12th edition in Naples. Similarly, the number of papers focusing on the different aspects of myology and of scientific journals specifically dedicated to myology is in a continuous and constant increase. A

search in PubMed, under the heading “muscle “ reported, at the date of 13 April 2015, 912119 papers and under the heading “muscle disorders” 168,931 papers, in a similar fashion the first scientific journals *Muscle & Nerve*, edited by Bradley in the USA in 1964, *Acta Myologica* edited in Naples by Giovanni Nigro and Lucia Ines Comi in 1982, and *Neuromuscular Disorders*, edited by V. Dubowitz in London in 1990, were rapidly followed in the last few years by the creation of *Skeletal Muscles*, edited by K. Campbell in 2011, *European Journal of Translational Myology-BAM* edited in Padua by U. Carraro in 2014, and the *Journal of Neuromuscular Diseases*, edited by Bonnemant and Lochmuller both in 2014.

Furthermore the textbook “Myology” edited by Andrew Engel (that is) considered the “bible” for lovers of Myology, has reached its third edition.

In the meantime the attention to the care needs of people living with muscle diseases increased so that many Clinical Centers of Myology were created, achieve international fame. To be mentioned among others the Center of Cardiomyology and Medical Genetics, at the Second University of Naples, founded by Giovanni Nigro in 1976, the Institute of Myology initiated in Paris, in 1996, and the Dubowitz Neuromuscular Centre (DNC) in London. All these Centres provide clinical assessment, diagnostic services, advice on treatment and rehabilitation, and are involved in clinical trials and in basic research focused on understanding the cause of neuromuscular diseases, and identifying novel therapeutic intervention. They became a point of reference for patients, families and doctors, as sites where specialized consultations, fundamental and clinical research teams and teaching on muscle and muscle diseases are grouped together in public hospitals.

The major development reached by Myology in Italy, in Europe and in the States, has been efficiently described by C. Angelini in a paper published in *Acta Myologica* in 2011 (5).

In spite of this intense and fascinating process, Myology is still considered the “Cinderella” of the medical disciplines and the researchers who are involved in the

field as “isolated people”. Furthermore the scientific journals publishing on the topic are listed among journals of internal medicine and/or neurological sciences, at the bottom of the rankings.

We are convinced that it is time for Myology to be declared a separate discipline among the branches of Medicine and solicit the help of Myologists worldwide to make this dream possible.

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