

Twenty-five years of AIM: from the initiative of a small group of myologists to a successful Italian research institution. The story of the Italian Association of Myology

By the late 1990s, it had become increasingly clear to experts that neuromuscular diseases and, in particular, muscle disorders were entering a new era. Advances in genetic and molecular technologies were set to transform what had long been considered a “minor” and “rare” branch of neurology into one of the leading fields for the development of innovative therapies.

Anticipating the growing need for new knowledge, expertise, and collaboration, a group of myologists within the Italian Association of Neuropathology recognized the importance of establishing a dedicated “common home”. Their vision was to create an Italian organization that would encompass all clinical aspects of neuromuscular diseases while bringing together specialists from a wide range of related disciplines.

What began as the initiative of a small group quickly gained broad consensus, leading to the foundation of the **Italian Association of Myology (AIM)**. The project received significant academic support and encouragement from distinguished figures, including Prof. Giovanni Lanzi (Pavia), Prof. Corrado Messina (Messina), prof. Giovanni Nigro (Naples) and Prof. Guglielmo Scarlato (Milan).

The official articles of Association were signed **on October 6, 2000** in Bologna during a meeting held in the Aula Magna of the Rizzoli Orthopedic Institute, kindly made available by Luciano Merlini (Fig. 1). Thirty-two founding members were present, while additional thirty-two supported the initiative remotely. United by a common vision, they unanimously recognized the need for a **scientific society** capable of uniting Italian clinicians dedicated to the study, diagnosis, and treatment of muscle diseases.

The first elected Scientific Board included: Giuseppe Vita as President; Tiziana Mongini as Secretary; Luisa Politano as Treasurer and Corrado Angelini, Enrico Bertini, Luciano Merlini, Maurizio Moggio, Serenella Servidei, Antonino Uncini as advisors.

The first official Statute was signed in **Taormina in November 2000** (Fig. 2). It underwent a major revision in 2017 and was most recently updated on May 30, 2025 during the 25th Anniversary General Assembly, held once again in Taormina symbolically returning to the place where AIM’s journey began.

AIM was founded as an officially recognized scientific organization with the mission of promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange among Italian neuromuscular centers, while also fostering integration with other scientific disciplines, including cardiology, pulmonology, psychiatry, orthopedics, genetics, and neuroscience. It also maintains strong ties with the Italian Society of Neurology (SIN), as well as with the national associations of Neuropathology, Child Neuropsychiatry, and Neuropediatrics.

Over the years, the AIM Presidents have included Corrado Angelini (Padua, 2003-2006), Tiziana Mongini (Turin, 2006-2009), Antonio Toscano (Messina, 2009-2012), Maurizio Moggio (Milan, 2012-2015), Gabriele Siciliano (Pisa, 2015-2018), Carlo Minetti (Genoa, 2018-2021), Giacomo Comi (Milan, 2021-2024), and Vincenzo Nigro, current President (Naples, 2024-2027). Numerous colleagues have served as Secretary, Treasurer, or Advisor.

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Since 2000, AIM has grown to become a national reference point for neuro-muscular sciences in Italy. Among its most significant achievements are:

- Creation of a multidisciplinary hub to promote, integrate, and disseminate knowledge in the field of neuro-muscular disorders, ultimately improving patient care.
- Supporting the development of diagnostic and therapeutic protocols to standardize and enhance patient management across Italy.
- Providing training opportunities and mentorship for young clinicians and researchers, while organizing national and international scientific conferences.
- Promoting multicenter, multidisciplinary studies and facilitating the integration of basic and clinical research.
- Interacting with national institutions, acting as a key liaison with the Ministry of Health and the National Health Service on policies and resource allocation for neuro-muscular diseases, many of which are classified as rare conditions.
- Strengthening international collaborations through partnerships and exchange programs with leading European and global societies, consolidating AIM's role in the international neuro-muscular research community.

Today, **AIM has over 400 members**, including neurologists, pediatric neurologists, cardiologists, geneticists, physiatrists, biologists, and other specialists working in more than twenty tertiary centers throughout Italy, dedicated to the diagnosis, treatment, and research of neuromuscular diseases.

Furthermore, AIM currently coordinates **over 10 Study Groups**, each focused on specific muscle disorders, including Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), FacioScapuloHumeral Dystrophy (FSHD), Myotonic Disorders (MyD), Myasthenia Gravis (MG), Inflammatory Myopathies (IM), Pompe Disease (PD) and other rare neuro-muscular disorders. These groups facilitate collaboration, data sharing, and the development of shared guidelines, playing a fundamental role in defining Italy's contribution to international research.

The official journal of the Italian Association of Myology is *Acta Myologica*, founded in 1981 by the late Professor Giovanni Nigro. This journal, which represents one of the main scientific outlets in the world, is open access and makes its articles immediately available online, free of charge to readers.

Each year, the Annual Congress is organized in a different Italian city making it the most important scientific meeting in Italy dedicated to neuro-muscular diseases. The first AIM Annual Congress took place in Camogli (Genoa) in Autumn 2001, bringing together 90 self-funded researchers and clinicians. Since then, the event has grown steadily, both in term of attendance and of support by several companies engaged in research and innovative therapies. Other cities that have hosted AIM Congresses include: Turin (2002), Padua (2003 and 2023), Taormina (2004 and 2025), Naples (2005 and 2015), Rome (2006 and 2024), Ferrara (2007), Pisa (2008), Verona (2009), Milan (2010), Villa Simius (CA, 2011), Baia Samuele (RG, 2012), Stresa (VB, 2013), Sirmione (BS, 2014), Lecce (2016), Syracuse (2017), Genoa (2018), Bergamo (2019), and Matera (2022) (Fig. 3). In 2020 and 2021, the congresses were held virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The last Congress, held in Taormina and celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Association, attracted over 500 Italian and European participants, including clinicians, researchers, healthcare professionals, industry representatives, and patient advocacy groups. The program featured extensive scientific discussions, presentations of more than 200 abstracts, and updates on cutting-edge research, emerging therapies, and innovative clinical practices. The event reaffirmed AIM's role as the **leading scientific reference** for neuro-muscular disorders in Italy and as an increasingly authoritative presence on the international scene.

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Figure 1. Bologna, October 6, 2020. Some founder members of AIM. Standing, from left: Maurizio Moggio, Giuseppe Vita, Luciano Merlini, Tiziana Mongini, Enrico Bertini, Laura Jarre. Squatting: Antonio di Muzio, Gabriella Silvestri, Serenella Servidei, Massimiliano Filosto.



Figure 2. Taormina, November 25, 2020, on the occasion of the signing of the Statute by the members of the Board of Directors. From left, Corrado Angelini, Tiziana Mongini, Giuseppe Vita, Luciano Merlini, Luisa Politano, Maurizio Moggio, Serenella Servidei. Back row, Enrico Bertini.



Figure 3. Group photo at the 14th AIM Congress in Sirmione. From left to right, among others, Paola Tonin, Angela Berardinelli, Tiziana Mongini, Claudio Bruno, Luisa Politano, Giuseppe Vita, Luciano Merlini, Giovanni Meola, Antonio Toscano, Salvatore Di Mauro, Corrado Angelini, Giovanni Nigro, Roberto Massa