

Lorenzo Tomatis

3 January 1929 - 21 September 2007



Tributes and Remembrances from Friends and Colleagues

These messages and outpourings of respect and love commemorate Lorenzo's great accomplishments and achievements and his particular leadership rôle in protecting the health and well-being of people throughout the world, especially workers and those less able to fend for themselves. He was a

champion of fairness, a stalwart of scientific honesty and integrity, a leader among leaders in public health and the field of chemical carcinogenesis, an innovator of primary prevention, and a sincerely compassionate individual. Lorenzo taught us by calm example, was a confidant and counselor to scores, a demanding and caring friend, and a consummate gentleman and delving scholar. He is and will continue to be missed and mourned.

Memorials in Journals

Lorenzo Tomatis 1929 - 2007. In memoriam. *Environ Health Perspect* 2008 Jan; 116 [1]: A16-17. - James Huff and Ronald Melnick

Doctor Lorenzo Tomatis [1929-2007]. *Eur J Oncol* 2007 Dec; 12 [4]: 283. - Philip Landrigan

An appreciation of Lorenzo Tomatis by a friend and colleague. *Carcinogenesis*. 2008 May; 29 (5): 889. - Ruggero Montesano

Lorenzo Tomatis and environmental cancer risk. *Ann Ist Super Sanita*. 2008; 44 (1): 5-7. - Benedetto Terracini

In Memoriam Lorenzo Tomatis. *Int J Occup Environ Health*. 2008 Apr-Jun; 14 (2): 83-5. - Benedetto Terracini

Prevention, ethics and science: lessons from Lorenzo Tomatis. *Ann Ist Super Sanita*. 2008; 44 (1): 8-12. - GA Zapponi, I Marcello, A Carere

Passages, alphabetically by last name of contributor

My heart was filled with sadness upon reading about the passing of our dear friend Dr. Tomatis. He was not only a champion and defender of public

health but also a great humanitarian who valued human life and grieved for human suffering. May God bless his soul. – *Kamal Abdo*

So sad. A great man and friend. I will miss him. – *Carl Barrett*

Oh, no, what a sad message. Lorenzo was a dear friend, as you say a champion of public health. We all miss him. I cannot forget his wonderful Ramazzini lecture and his strong message of public health. – *Fiorella Belpoggi*

I'm so sorry to hear this. I know Lorenzo meant a lot to you and many others. I have confidence others will attempt to carry on his work. – *Susan Booker*

It is sad indeed, to lose such a leader in public health advocacy. His illuminating light will shine for a long time to come, however, through his many colleagues, admirers, and insightful publications. – *Douglas Bristol*

If ever there was an argument for longevity, Dr. Tomatis was one for whom we would hope far longer tenure. When I briefly met him at the CR “pubic” meeting a couple of years ago I didn't know much about him, but was impressed with his helpfulness and humility. When he said he had to go to the front of the room and excused himself, I assume he was giving a talk. But he was receiving the Ramazzini Award for his lifelong work. I suppose it was typical, based on what I learned subsequently, that he would be helpful and encouraging to someone he didn't know at all, rather than waiting in a self-important manner at the front of the room for the award ceremony to begin. Clearly if we had more people like him, we would live in a far better world. I am glad you wrote in your EHP tribute the details of his life, seeing that he too was at the Univ. of Chicago early in his career, where he decided to take on cancer causation. One could not live there without being confronted daily with the impacts of the steel mills, air pollution, and ever present smells and sunless days on people's lives. Seeing too many young adults riddled with cancer and the spectre of people coughing up blood while walking down the street – observations common to all medical researchers there

– gave pause to us all. But unlike most who found ways to block it from memory, Lorenzo took the unconscionable parts of modern life as a personal challenge and did extraordinary things to better the world. He certainly lives on in spirit. – *Kathy Burns*

Sad news. Our dear friend Lorenzo died today. – *Ricardo Cabral*

Lorenzo was a giant in cancer prevention and an inspiration to all of us who worked with him. His (2002 IJOEH) critique of IARC for relying on mechanistic hypotheses to downgrade the carcinogenicity evaluations of major industrial chemicals was the opening shot in a successful campaign to rescue IARC and restore its high standards of scientific objectivity in public health. In this campaign, as in the Ramazzini lecture of 2005, Lorenzo Tomatis was a leader in demanding that vigilant efforts be made to prevent business interests from manipulating IARC and other scientific institutions so vital to public health. He was a wonderful human being, a teacher, an exemplar, and he lives on in all of us who learned from his example and carry on. He will be missed by us all. – *Barry Castleman*

I concur with others who have mentioned Lorenzo's award presentation. Immediately after he gave it I asked him to send a copy to me, which he did. It was more impressive in written version than in verbal delivery. It captures what I, and I assume, many others in the Collegium believe. It is a masterpiece, and not in his native language! I too support honoring his contributions. My best to his family and close friends. – *Carl Cranor*

It is with great sadness I learned the bad news that Lorenzo passed away. We had rather close relationships during his tenure at IARC and also after, up to few months ago, with a friendly phone call. I still remember our Eastern tour in Sicily many years ago, his positive attitude always focused in the interpretation of the different ways of life to which he was confronted. My warmest condolences. – *Massimo Crespi*

A great light has gone out of our lives, leaving us with a luminous legacy. In his last months, Lorenzo

made the effort to critique my book and to collaborate with Annie Sasco and me in developing a critique of current policies that Annie will present at the Ramazzini meetings next month. Certainly, NIEHS is one proper place to honor his work, so should WHO. We are planning to hold a symposium with Ramazzini next year on trends in cancer in developed and developing countries that could certainly be held in his honor as well. – *Devra Davis*

Lorenzo's death is an event of great sadness but also a celebration of a life well spent. He influenced not only cancer research and policy but also young researchers entering the field. I recall fondly the first time I met Lorenzo in the early 1970's. – *John Dement*

Dr. Tomatis was instrumental in identifying which and how environmental exposures can lead to disease. It is important that we remember him and his contributions by carrying on his and this important work. – *June Dunnick*

Apart from contacting Lorenzo's family, I propose that we consider developing some form of a fitting memorial to Lorenzo, possibly as an annual or other periodic national symposium dedicated to him as a stellar director of the IARC and his tremendous accomplishments there, especially the IARC Monographs. The Cancer Prevention Coalition would be pleased to join with other interested non-profits, or possibly other individuals to consider funding this. May I recommend you consider some group initiatives along these lines? – *Samuel Epstein*

I add my sadness at learning about the passing of our dear friend Lorenzo. A pillar of correct and honest science, with true humanity joining with his command of the data. He will be missed. – *Arthur Frank*

Two years ago I was thoroughly impressed by Lorenzo's Ramazzini Award presentation in Carpi. I thought he captured vividly and beautifully the current state of affairs. I asked Phil to help me obtain an advance copy and Lorenzo readily agreed. I have used his paper as required reading in my UCLA environmental health course ever since. He will be

remembered by young scientists and professionals through their reading of his work each year from now on. We will all miss him. I agree that we should find some activity to commemorate his life. – *John Froines*

I would move for the Collegium Ramazzini to develop a concrete program of action focused on IARC, an Agency recognized primarily for the IARC Monographs, the Orange Books created and nurtured by Lorenzo. A working group could be formed specially funded and staffed to maintain continuous monitoring and support of the Agency, the direction of its program, and to promote an aggressive expansion of its mission. If nothing else is accomplished in Carpi, the birthplace of Bernardino Ramazzini, that kind of concrete contribution will perpetuate the legacy of Lorenzo Tomatis. Life ends for all of us, but that need not be the fate of our work. – *Morris Greenberg*

I liked Dr. Tomatis. Despite his position and intellect, he treated me with equanimity. – *John Grovenstein*

My condolences on the loss of Dr. Tomatis. I know he was a mentor and friend. I wish we could see more like him and David Rall coming up in the ranks. Maybe I'm just not able to spot them yet. – *Tom Hawkins*

Sad indeed. Should start moving on establishing some kind of memorial lecture, medal, or scholarship in the environmental sciences in honor of Lorenzo. – *Gary Hook*

Ho, Boy. A big, big loss. And very sad to lose such a fine, sweet, strong person. We've got to grow new ones. An NIEHS annual Lorenzo Tomatis Public Health Symposium, featuring the younger up-and-coming public, environmental, and occupational health scientists and physicians, as well as NGOs and community members. Do it. – *Kim Hooper*

We have lost not only a great scientist and physician, but also a dear and treasured friend. The many summers Delia and Lorenzo stayed, worked, and played in Chapel Hill are sorely missed. Delia's

daily commute and book writing at the UNC Library and Lorenzo's scientific contributions and learned cordiality at NIEHS. Most of all we miss our weekly home-prepared dinners together with multi-layered conversations and late night fun. We would often see Lorenzo and Delia on their early evening lengthy bicycle rides. We think of you often. – *Hannah Huff, Jackie Stillwell, James Huff*

Sad indeed as we learned of Lorenzo's passing. What to do? What to say? We feel and mourn his loss. Clearly we have lost another of the vanishing number of champions of public, occupational, and environmental health. As we all know, Lorenzo did more than any other to develop and substantiate the value of animal cancer studies in predicting human health hazards and protecting workers and the public from exposures to chemical carcinogens. Although he always cautioned me saying this, but he was without question the founder and creator of the IARC Monographs, the World's première and most important authority on chemical carcinogens. All who knew him recognize he was a humble and caring giant of a human being. He is dearly missed. Our sadness and condolences go to his best friend, confidant, and wife, Delia, and their cherished son Paolo, as well as to his other family members. With sorrow and sincerity we have lost a kindred spirit. – *James Huff*

I have been paralyzed to write anything about Lorenzo as I am so shocked and saddened by his death. I did read many wonderful comments about him from his peers and others. Today, I came across this picture of Lorenzo and Delia when they stayed with us in Falls Church a few years ago. Do you think I should send it to others? Too bad we don't do more to show our appreciation when people are still alive. – *Peter Infante*

I'm sorry I never had the opportunity to meet with Lorenzo. I wonder if this would be an opportunity for you to write an advocacy-oriented obituary for Am J Pub Health or other non-specialist publication. – *Michael Jacobson*

Dear Paolo. We are so very sorry to hear about Lorenzo. Terribly upsetting news. He was a truly

great person in every aspect. Tammy and I were very sad but we reminisced about Lorenzo and we thought about how lucky we were to have known him. Our thoughts and love go out to you and Delia in this difficult time. We kept hoping for another summer when he and Delia would visit Chapel Hill. We'll really miss him. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do. – *Bill & Tammy Jirles*

The news of Lorenzo Tomatis' death is shocking, particularly as we were preparing to be in Carpi to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Collegium Ramazzini. To lose one of the founding pillars is a great loss to us as well as to the entire scientific and public health communities. I remember his authoritative lecture he delivered in Bologna a couple of years ago. His is an irreparable loss. Collectively we will get over it. What a great man Lorenzo was. I had limited interaction with him but realized that he was a person committed to the cause. Alas we lost him. My heart goes out to the bereaved family. May God bestow peace on his generous soul. – *T K Joshi*

Oh my God. Not Lorenzo! What happened? I didn't know Lorenzo was sick. What a lovely man! So many people were touched by him. Today I happened to be watching a "Lidia's Italy" on Trieste today and thinking about him and how Delia and he must have interacted with exuberance and joy in that interesting, multi-ethnic, and very cultured city. I'll write to Delia. – *Myra Karstadt*

Lorenzo Tomatis was a good man. He did much to advance the cause of public health and the health of workers. He was a true follower of Ramazzini. I had the privilege to serve on two IARC Monograph Working Groups while Lorenzo was Director - the Benzene volume (#29) and the Silica volume (#42). What I remember most about those experiences was Lorenzo's strong sense of responsibility, his recognition that we absolutely had to get the science right, but that we also needed to present our findings in a way that would protect workers. I remember especially in the silica deliberations when the pressure on Lorenzo was fierce to declare silica to be not a human carcinogen. In response, he looked carefully at the data, he saw clearly that silica is indeed a carcinogen, and he resisted the pressure and made

the proper declaration. That's what being a follower of Ramazzini is all about. – *Philip Landrigan*

How, when, where - had he been sick - what can we do? What a delightful man. Do you know about any memorial service or anything like that? – *Sandy & Doug Lange*

Unfortunately, the good die young – at least before their full depth of influence is realized. – *Lawrence Lazarus*

I'm so sorry, although I did not know him personally, I admire his contribution to public health. I understand you and others will miss him deeply and my thoughts go out to you, his friends, and his family. – *Ruth Lunn*

Oh no. I am deeply saddened to hear of this loss. Lorenzo was a dear friend and one of my few super-heroes. I learned a lot from him and I hope to pursue his public health goals. He was a giant among us all. – *Ronald Melnick*

We are deeply shocked to hear about the loss of Lorenzo. We really loved him a lot. He was a great human, with deep soul, having much wide culture. We cannot forget our special evenings together in North Carolina, in particular listening together to the inspiring music played by our son, Gal. We remember well your attending of Gal's concerts. I personally had a lot of admiration for his knowledge and special character. We surely will miss and remember him forever. – *Abraham and Ossie Nyska*

I am saddened to learn of the passing of our distinguished colleague, Dr. Lorenzo Tomatis. Lorenzo made many important contributions to environmental and occupational health. I share the sentiments expressed by others that we should do something "special" as a tribute to his life. – *Kenneth Olden*

Like others, I mourn the death of a distinguished colleague and scholar and a warm and generous spirit and I endorse the idea of a special tribute. But I would also like to make another suggestion, in the spirit of his life. Lorenzo was a warrior in a battle

that began long before he was born and one that will continue long after his, and our, death. We are all part of that struggle. Might I suggest we take the sad occasion of his passing to rededicate ourselves to picking up the fight and close ranks around the empty place he has left. – *David Ozonoff*

Yes, sad indeed. A man greatly missed by many. – *Ingar Palmlund*

Sad news for all I'm sure, and especially for his friends and colleagues at NIEHS. My sincerest condolences. – *Jerry Phelps*

I am truly saddened by the loss of a great humanitarian and a great mentor. So many of us have been touched by Lorenzo's friendship, mentorship, and passionate desire to make this world better. I rejoice at having known him and grieve at knowing I will never again have the benefit of his keen intelligence and friendship. The world is a better place for him having walked through it and I am a better person for having known him. – *Christopher Portier*

We have received a sad message on the death of our Colleague and Friend, Professor Lorenzo Tomatis, the former long-time Director of the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer, IARC. Lorenzo was a dynamic and knowledgeable scholar, scientist and public health actor, whose impact is seen in cancer policies throughout the World. As a scientist and Director of the IARC, Lorenzo was innovative, courageous, and enduring. He defended the independent scientific position of IARC as he saw that sustainable cancer prevention can only be based on best science combined with public health action. He guided the IARC to meet the epidemiologically recognized world needs and promoted science on the occurrence, aetiology, mechanisms and risk assessment of cancer. He also initiated public health interventions for cancer prevention in both industrialized and developing countries. We must specially recognize his recognition of occupational cancer, assessment of occupational carcinogens, and prevention of cancer in the work environment. The lists of occupational carcinogens in many international bodies and several countries, including my own country, Finland, are based on evaluations

carried out under Lorenzo's leadership by IARC. Several IARC activities and programmes continue to follow the ideas originally generated by Lorenzo. The World Health Community will remember Lorenzo as a warm and humane Colleague, Friend and Scientist of the highest ethical standard. His life and his work will serve as inspiration and best example in every corner of the world for all of us who want to share his vision and will continue to work for cancer control and prevention. The international community, and I personally, express our sincere condolences and our deepest sympathy to Madam Delia Tomatis and his Family in their grief and sorrow. – *Jorma Rantanen*

How sad that Lorenzo is no longer with us. Before I came to know how fundamental his leadership was in applying science to regulatory policy in cancer, I was always struck by his unassuming, kind, gentle, and warm manner – and his razor sharp familiarity with EVERYTHING that was going on in Israel, my country – not only in medicine and science, but everything that affected it. I remember his last lecture well – all the more impressive because it was a throwback to the pre-slide and PowerPoint era, and the story he told of his life work. His life work and accomplishments in cancer prevention were his message – as was his quiet courage in resisting and challenging pressures to dilute this message. But from all the eulogies, it is clear he is still with us – in memory and in example. He lived the good life. – *Elihu D Richter*

I am so sorry to hear about Lorenzo's death. I felt so lucky to have known Lorenzo, the little bit that I did. He was such a nice person, so brilliant and so committed. That combination is so rare these days; and needed so much. Please pass on my deepest condolences to his wife and family. – *Andy Rowland*

I want to let you know how sorry I am that you have lost your long-time friend and colleague, Lorenzo. I know that the two of you had a close relationship over many years. The older I get the more I find that the hard part about getting older is not the aches and pains that you gain in your body but rather the loss of many close friends and family members who aren't really lost in your heart or mind. I am

thinking about you and hoping you are doing okay. – *N. Lou Rozier*

To my colleagues: The passing of Lorenzo should remind us of an unfilled promise of the Collegium. Phil will remember the special delegation of Fellows led by Selikoff that visited IARC to meet with Lorenzo. Tomatis, always forthright, made very clear to us that the agency he shaped was in need of continuous political support to maintain what they had, and massive financial support to fulfill its potential. After the meeting, besides enjoying the good food of Lyons, we resolved to bring this message back to the Collegium and to develop practical measures to help Lorenzo. If I were able to join you this year in Carpi - and I cannot - I would move for the development of a concrete program of action focused on IARC. Perhaps a working group specially funded and staffed to maintain continuous monitoring of the agency, the direction of its program and to promote an aggressive expansion of its mission. If nothing else is accomplished in Carpi, that kind of concrete contribution will perpetuate the legacy of Lorenzo Tomatis. Life ends for all of us, but that need not be the fate of our work. – *Sheldon W. Samuels*

Many of us "grew up" professionally under the umbrella of the teachings and advances of IARC. Dr. Tomatis was a figure and an example of professional credibility and integrity. We know that IARC is a Global Reference, and has made reality the concept of knowledge as a global good. I believe that the voice and impetus of Dr. Tomatis should be enhanced by the Collegium, and strongly assess how can the moral Authority of the Collegium contribute to support and make stronger the activities of IARC. Some of us have witnessed how it can be made vulnerable. Let's develop an initiative during the next Carpi meeting on the rôle of the Collegium in relation to IARC. Nothing better for the memory of a leader than to keep on pursuing his dream. With deepest regards to Dr. Lorenzo Tomatis' family and closest friends. – *Carlos Santos-Burgoa*

Such devastating news. Lorenzo was a brilliant activist for public health, hard on his friends and enemies, pushing us all to do better, be and remain

stronger. He was a fearless ally in our common struggle to prevent cancer. How sad, now, that he has been stricken by that very disease that Lorenzo would say was preventable. I will miss him very much. – *Jennifer Sass*

Thank you so much for sending this to me. I had not heard that Dr. Tomatis had died. What a loss. The tribute is beautiful. – *Loretta Schuman*

I know Lorenzo was your good friend and valued colleague. Please accept my sincere sympathy on his death. – *Mike Shelby*

It is our honor to have shared the space of a few years with Lorenzo. Those who come after us, will have to learn from us through our emulation of his great example of humanism and science. – *Ellen Silbergeld*

Dr. Tomatis was a rare individual with the vision, compassion, and the will to change how we perceive the world and its health. – *Suzanne Snedeker*

With great sadness I inform you Collegium Fellows of the death of our dear friend and Fellow, Lorenzo Tomatis. Lorenzo, together with Irving Selikoff, Norton Nelson, David Rall, and Cesare Maltoni was among the scientists who contributed to create a culture of prevention in the strategy to control cancer. The energy and skill with which he gave life and continuity to the IARC Monographs will be remembered as an important milestone not only for the Agency, but also for public health. In 2005, Lorenzo received the Ramazzini Award for his outstanding contribution to the prevention of cancer, in particular the identification of industrial agents. This year [2008] the Collegium will have a moment of silence in Carpi to pay tribute to our colleague, a great scientist, intellectual, and friend. – *Morando Soffritti*

What a loss to us all! Please extend my condolences to all who knew him, and to his family, in particular. I would like to see us establish, as a tribute to his monumental contributions, an award that would also serve to inspire and recognize high-level contributions in public health. Sincerely and in sympathy. – *Colin Soskolne*

I share the sentiments of others who have written. Professor Tomatis' death is such a loss as he was a true scholar and someone who was a genuinely warm individual. I was so impressed by his lecture a few years back, bringing forward so many thoughts and ideas on cancer prevention, especially important to the young scientists and public health professionals in the environmental and occupational health sciences. I fully agree with others who have expressed the thought that we should find some way to commemorate his life and his significant contributions. Please convey my condolences to his family. – *Bill Suk*

I just wish I could have talked with Lorenzo before he died. Lordy, this is a sad day for me. I thought and talked about him over the weekend with my friends and family and continued to hope that he was still with us. There is such a void on this earth today; Lorenzo can never be replaced and will always remain a very special person in my heart. There aren't enough words to describe the loss of his presence in our lives. – *Martha Taylor*

There were few people in my world who symbolized scientific integrity, personal warmth, and endless humor as Lorenzo Tomatis did. From the earliest academic contact with him, through his writings, to the great friendship that developed through our contacts at the Collegium Ramazzini, he was for me a giant of science, medicine, and public health. To say that I will miss him, and that the world of medicine has lost one of its stars, understates my feelings. We have no replacement for him. Sadly, in science. – *Danny Teitelbaum*

I think you heard that Lorenzo has passed yesterday afternoon. We were there with him, and he was unconscious but calm and didn't suffer. Delia is relatively speaking fine and is taking it with a lot of (Oriental) philosophy. Please eventually tell other people that might not yet know about his passing. I'm thinking for example of Norman Breslow in Seattle and others that may come to you. – *Paolo Tomatis*

I too share in the sense of loss and the need to respect and cherish Lorenzo's legacy. – *Arthur Upton*

We have lost a true leader in public health and cancer prevention. We have lost a respected mentor who did not hesitate to go against the prevailing paradigms if he felt that public health was endangered. I have lost a great humane friend whom I and we owe so much. My sincere condolences to Lorenzo's wife Delia and his son Paolo. – *Harri Vainio*

I am very sad that Lorenzo Tomatis passed away. I did not know him personally, but I appreciated very much what he did. His departure from the director of IARC was already an important set-back. I recently was somewhat shocked by a report by the French academies of Science and Medicine, that states that pollutants account for about 0.1% of cancer incidence and cancer mortality. There is still a lot work to do, a task to which he might have made a very important contribution. – *Nik van Larebeke*

Wow, what a loss. Both for me personally and for the scientific community. He was one of the finest human beings I ever met. I'm amazed by the incredible impact he had on the lives of so many outstanding scientists and people in general. Many people had enormous respect for his scientific judgment and integrity, while considering him a close personal friend. He had the uncanny ability to question ideas that most of us blindly accepted. I once asked him how he acquired this refreshing ability, and he said as a young child he was encouraged not to accept any dogma or ideas without extensive analysis and questioning. I guess, for him, there were no authorities. I am deeply saddened by his passing. – *Joe Wachsmann*

Someone should write a nice memoriam for several of our great remaining public health journals. Would be fitting to name a building after him in addition to an annual conference on primary prevention. Lorenzo was a very young 78. He emailed to me last month. – *Jerrold Ward*

Thanks for letting us know of the passing of Dr. Tomatis. I remember him well from the times I attended some of the IARC meetings. He was certainly a top international cancer researcher and overall a very nice guy. I was glad that I was able to know him briefly as a result of my visits to the IARC before and during his tenure as Director. I was unaware that he had authored several books that I had not read; a fact that I will remedy. We are unfortunately at that time in our lives when age and other things catch up to us and our friends and colleagues begin to pass away. Just goes to show that we need to step back sometimes and note what things are important and what things are not. I know that you knew him well and interacted with him often. Losing a good friend hurts. – *John Wassom*

It is with great sadness that I inform you at NIEHS of the death of Dr. Lorenzo Tomatis. He was the second director of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and was internationally known for his research in cancer prevention. He will be remembered for his outstanding achievements and life long commitment to public health. – *Sam Wilson*

Please express my sincere condolence to Professor Tomatis' family and his relatives. I also share the same vision that we should try our best to cultivate more young scientists to follow his steps on proactive occupational and environmental health. – *Jung-Der Wang*

So many colleagues are really missing him. Lorenzo was a truly respectable leader and friend for many of us. Please do send me Delia's address in Trieste. – *Hiroshi Yamasaki*

Very, very sad. My deepest condolences to his family, and to you and others who knew him so well and had the joy of working closely with him. – *Lauren Zeise*