In Memoriam:
Jean THIVOLET

The scientific, university and medical communities pay homage to the memory of Professor Jean Thivolet, who died on February 4th, 2011. For all those who knew him he will be remembered as a doctor, teacher and an exceptional scientist who took French dermatology to the highest levels of international renown.

Born on February 4th, 1926 in Lyon, France, Jean Thivolet was Chair of the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology of Edouard Herriot Hospital (Pavillon R), Lyon, from 1972-1992, after having been Head of the Dermatology Department of the Antiquaille Hospital and holding the Chair for Hygiene and Social Welfare.

Jean Thivolet was a dermatologist and researcher with visionary insight concerning future developments in medical practice. In parallel with his clinical activities, he created a laboratory of cutaneous immunopathology, which he directed from 1977 to 1992 and which was quickly recognised as the first INSERM dermatology unit. This grouping of clinical and research services was to be one of the most efficient dermatological research centres in the world and attracted clinicians and researchers of all nationalities. The cosmopolitan aspect was very important to him. His energies led to the creation of a Masters in Cutaneous Biology and to an annual seminar on immunodermatology. His team contributed to major advances in knowledge about immunodermatology, in particular in the fields of Langerhans cells, bullous autoimmune diseases and the culture of epidermal cells for the treatment of major burns.

Jean Thivolet was as demanding of himself as he was of others, very open-minded, energetic, enthusiastic and determined. He was full of charisma and inspired many vocations. Pavillon R was a training platform for innumerable students and fellow workers who are now dermatology professors or brilliant researchers, both in France and in the rest of the world.

Jean Thivolet was president of the French Dermatology Society and created the French and European Societies for Dermatological Research. Being convinced that medical and scientific excellence is attained through peer contact at an international level, Jean Thivolet was involved in the steering groups for world dermatology. He was a member of the managing committee of the International League of Dermatological Societies and of the International Dermatology Foundation.

Jean Thivolet retired in 1995 to spend more time with his family and friends, while at the same time continuing until 2009 to act as Editor-in-chief of the European Journal of Dermatology, which he had founded in 1991.

In addition to his professional career as a leading specialist, Jean Thivolet will be missed by all those who had the good fortune to know and appreciate his abilities, his honesty and his scientific rigour, his simplicity, his deep humanity and his indestructible friendship.

Jean-François Nicolas
Dermatologist, Professor of Immunology
Allergology and Clinical Immunology department, Lyon University Hospital, France