



Lymphoma Study Association

Bertrand Coiffier

Leader in lymphoma research. Born in Le Puy-en-Velay, France, on March 26, 1947, he died of lung cancer in Lyon, France, on Jan 2, 2019, aged 71 years.

When Bertrand Coiffier received the San Salvatore Prize in 2008 for his contributions to the treatment of patients with lymphoma, he used the award lecture not to focus on his own achievements but to discuss the challenges ahead. "He was a commanding personality, who could project modesty and confidence at the same time", said Anas Younes, chief of the lymphoma service and Steven Greenberg Chair at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, USA. "He didn't dwell on what he had done, which many people would have done in an awards setting."

What Coiffier had done included revolutionising treatment for patients with diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL). Before research he published in 2002, standard treatment was cyclophosphamide, doxorubicin, vincristine, and prednisone (CHOP). Coiffier investigated the addition of rituximab, which significantly increased remission rates and survival for patients with this common lymphoma. "He pushed to design the study", said Gilles Salles, who heads the haematology department of the Lyon Sud University Hospital and is a professor at Université Claude Bernard in France. "This has saved the lives of many patients in the world. Introducing rituximab with CHOP has significantly diminished the risk of death for patients with diffuse large B and all the lymphoma as an extension. It was a major step forward." Coiffier and his colleagues from the Groupe d'Etude des Lymphomes de l'Adulte (GELA) also initiated studies into the benefits of the adriamycin, cyclophosphamide, vindesine,

bleomycin, prednisone plus rituximab regimen on aggressive lymphomas in young patients. And Coiffier was instrumental in the development of the International Prognostic Index that helps predict the outcome for patients with DLBCL.

Coiffier helped establish many collaborations during his career. "I think he understood if you really want to get things done, you have to get people to work together", said James Armitage, the Joe Shapiro Professor of Medicine in the Division of Oncology and Hematology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, USA. He added that the research on CHOP might not ever have happened if Coiffier had not first helped found GELA in 1984. GELA drew together clinicians, pathologists, and biologists from France, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Switzerland to improve basic research on adult lymphoma. "Making GELA was maybe more important than [the 2002 study]", Armitage said. "There wouldn't have been that study without the group." GELA, which merged with the French Groupe Ouest-Est d'études des Leucémies Aigües et autres Maladies du Sang in 2012 to become the Lymphoma Study Association, was "recognised for the quality and the strength of the studies and the design and the quality of the data", Salles said. Coiffier was also instrumental in the creation of the European Lymphoma Institute in 2000. "Bertrand's idea was to make the different European groups researching lymphoma work together and, at the beginning, to propose some European trials", said Hervé Tilly, the former Director General of Centre Henri Becquerel in Rouen, France.

Coiffier was always eager to help researchers around the world develop their careers. "He was not just a leader in France, but he was leading the entire lymphoma world in that pre- and early digital era. The number of mentees in Australia alone is testament to this", said Judith Trotman who worked as an intern in his service in Lyon, France, in 2010, and is now a senior lymphoma clinician in the Australasian Leukaemia & Lymphoma Group, a collaborative cooperating trials group.

Coiffier was based in Lyon, France, during his career. He received his MD and PhD degrees from the University of Lyon, where he was also trained in haematology and medical oncology, before eventually becoming a professor of haematology in the department of haematology at the Hospices Civils de Lyon and the Université Claude Bernard. He served as an editor of *Leukemia Research* and the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* and was the founding chair of the Lymphoma Hub, a global education platform. "He will be remembered for his contribution toward the incorporation of antibody therapy into standard treatment for lymphoma", said Andrew Lister, the Emeritus Gordon Hamilton Professor of Medical Oncology in the Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, UK. "His contribution was much greater than that, actually. He was very much a voice of French haematological oncology." Coiffier is survived by his wife, Christiane, his three children, and grandchildren.

Andrew Green