

A MEMORIAL IN HONOR OF PROFESSOR RAFAEL CHERCHÈVE



Rafael Chérchève was born in 1904 in Paris and left this world on January 13, 2000, at his home in St Cloud, Paris.

Rafael Chérchève is known as the father of modern endosseous implantology. He had been introduced to a concept of implantology by Professor Formiggini, an important stomatologist of

Italy. Rafael had been invited to talk at one of the earlier meetings of the AAID held in Miami during the 1960s. He had little knowledge of English. However, with Isaiah Lew's limited

knowledge of French, he presented the first organized kit for the insertion of endosseous implant; it was designed by him and made of implantable materials. This kit included sized drills, taps, implants, and insertion tools. He and his younger brother, Michel, also made "thin ridge screws" for areas with limited thickness of alveolar bone. Ten years before Branemark of Sweden, Professor Chérchève had a patent in France for what we refer to as a "buried root form implant."

His very important contribution was the formation of the first university approved course in oral and maxillofacial implantology. This was accomplished at Lariboisière Hospital in Paris, France, an integral part of the teaching system of hospitals of the University of Paris Faculty of Medicine. This led to implantology being accepted at other teaching institutions throughout the world, such as Brookdale Hospital under the auspices of Norman Cranin, and the Polyclinic Hospital under Isaiah Lew, as well as other pioneers of implantology. Physicians and dentists came from all over the world to listen to and to observe these procedures in Paris. Many were allowed to demonstrate their implantologic concepts on patients provided by Professor Chérchève, and upon their departure, he was left with the responsibility of caring for these patients whether the procedures were successful or not, and for providing the prostheses that they ultimately would require.

Interesting and exciting men came from the four corners of the earth to participate, to learn, and to bring knowledge to others at his courses. These men included Isaiah Lew, Nor-

man Cranin, Lenny Linkow, Martin Baskas (who unfortunately also passed away this year), Maury Fagan, Ford Turner and Joe Warriner (along with the membership of the entire Alabama Study Group), Lobello, Tramonte, Muaratori, Pasqualini, Mondani, Hruska, Vajda, Kaketa, Kojima, Heinrich, Grafelman, Börkel, and Bender. The list is endless.

Professor Cherchève's dynamism and strength overcame the opposition of the medical community, members of which were convinced that intraoral exposure of implants would lead to myriad medical complications. Today, implants are an accepted part of the treatment armamentarium.

His tenacity and devotion to his profession do not approach an explanation of his character, his warmth and kindness, his exuberance, his joyful and giving spirit, and the bravery and tenacity that allowed him to survive during World War II through the Nazi occupation of Paris.

As a medical officer, actually a prisoner of the Germans, Professor Cherchève was in charge of a maxillofacial hospital for the war's wounded. He saved many British soldiers by wrapping their heads completely during

German officer inspections because these prisoners were supposed to have been sent to camps within Germany. Most of the older and wiser medical men had fled to Free France, to Spain, and to Africa, or wherever they could. At the time, Professor Cherchève was married to the daughter of Georges Roualt, the famous impressionist artist. His wife constantly begged him to leave Paris. But he helped many people and many members of the Maquis, the resistance, to escape to Free France. At this time, Professor Cherchève was denounced by the dean of Lyon Medical School, who was a supposed friend of his, as being Jewish. This was exceedingly dangerous, because Hitler's deranged Nazis were intent on rounding up the last of the remaining Jews and sending them back to Germany for extermination. As a result, much tension existed within his family and among their circle of friends.

After the war, he became the chief surgeon for one of the most important organizations in France, the "Guelles Cassés." The organization treats soldiers and veterans who are facially wounded. They are treated not only for physical problems but also for emotional problems associated with their

deformities. Their families were also assisted on how to cope with living with facial defects.

He was selected for the highest honor of France: the Legion of Honor. He was seated next to President Mitterand during the celebration of the 50-year festivities of the invasion of Normandy by the Allied Forces.

Professor Cherchève's joy of living, his culture, his knowledge of music and literature, his skills as a great painter and artist (he had art exhibitions as well), and his zest for life were incomparable. He taught relaxation procedures, including hypnotism and milder forms called sophrologie, throughout the world.

I personally did not only lose a teacher; I lost a friend who changed the entire course of my life with his warmth and joy. He touched everyone who came in contact with him.

We thank you very much, Rafael Cherchève, and we know that every one who came into contact with you will be forever grateful for the creativity, the insight, the skills, and the love you have given to them.

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