

PREFACE

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During the weekend of November 11, 1986, Charles MERIEUX had taken the initiative of convening an international seminar at Les Pensières, a magical and symbolic place for him, in order to inform the Lyon medical community of the existence of an approach born beyond Atlantique, which was entitled *Clinical Epidemiology*. He had contact with the International Clinical Epidemiology Network (INCLLEN) - an organization supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and which ensured the international dissemination of this approach. A certain number of academics responsible for teaching and administrative officials of Lyon activities were invited to this seminar, and on the other hand, a delegation from the United States of America who wanted to detail the process.

Only Charles Mérieux was capable of setting up a meeting like this, and very quickly understand the interest in getting closer to the international structure.

Quite quickly, many of us were convinced by the interest of this pedagogical approach, while very much regretting the title. Indeed, clinical epidemiology does not mean much to a Frenchman who, on the other hand, remembered the method of EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE defined by Claude BERNARD as an essential element of the methodology in clinical experimentation.

Because that is what it is all about: clinical epidemiology corresponds to the methodology of clinical research.

Very quickly, we were able to get out of this semantic quarrel and realize how useful things could be in practice, especially for the future of research in the Lyon university hospital entity.

The approach quickly declined in terms of trainers. Indeed, experimental medicine had disappeared from the framework of the University for about ten years and, consequently, it was necessary to start from scratch. The only way to do this was to send a number of young, up-and-coming colleagues to train in the various centers, whether in Canada, the United States of America or even Australia.

The sinews of war were missing and, as always, the Marcel Mérieux Foundation generously injected funding to get things started. Luckily, favorable circumstances allowed the Ministry of Higher Education and Research to take an interest in the problem. Thus, 11 future university professors were able to access this additional training for periods often exceeding 12 months.

Things fell into place after the graduates returned. The Hospices Civils de Lyon have made a significant contribution to the development of the new discipline, alongside the University, within the framework of the Department of Medical Information (DIM).

I will not go back over the years that followed, and which saw this training dynamic spread outside France, particularly in North Africa and in the French-speaking countries of Eastern Europe.

A body of doctrine was gradually put in place and gave rise to the publication of a first work in 1995. It was absolutely essential to bring all the chapters already covered up to date and to complete them.

This was the work accomplished by Yves MATILLON, the President of the International Francophone Clinical Epidemiological Network and by Hélène PELLET who is the permanent facilitator of the RECIF. I thank them and all those who have contributed with their services to this type of action.

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