

WHO, Geneva, 1984 : remembrance.

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As far i can remember, i have been offered to join the « WHO meeting on cancer pain » as no other pain specialist was identified in France at that time, at the international level. I was an anesthesiologist working in Hopital Paul Brousse (Villejuif) which was attended by so many cancer patients suffering from severe pain, which was inadequately treated for their pain : there were a large number of reasons to explain that poor situation. At the time, spinal opioids were a new approach and oncologists were pushing to offer it to their patients as it was better than nothing.

Arriving in the large room at WHO, i found that so many physicians encountered difficulties to treat adequately cancer pain, that France was not the only country with strict regulations, etc. Dr. Foley, Twycross, Bonica and Ventafridda were obviously leaders : they made a great job in listenning all participants from all around the world, by assessing the situation worldwide, etc, and by offering solutions which can be helpful to a large majority of participants. In particular the idesa of a « 3 step ladder » which is still famous, focusing on oral morphine and treatment by the clock.

This came later into the famous booklet on « cancer pain relief » published by WHO