Francesco Sinigaglia
August 18, 1953 - November 4, 2025

I have had the privilege of knowing Francesco Sinigaglia both as a friend and as a successful immunologist colleague. I remember our first meeting in the mid 80s at the "Gruppo di Cooperazione in Immunologia" (GCI), in Cortona. GCI (from which SIICA was then derived) represented a dynamic driving force of Italian Immunology of my generation for several years, promoting international visibility and reputation for many immunologists. In this context, Francesco was a pioneer in realizing the importance of the molecular immunology and of biotechnology as essential tools for understanding the basic mechanisms, especially for the purpose of developing new immunotherapeutic strategies, such as new vaccines and immunomodulators. Indeed, Francesco soon moved to "La Roche" (Basel) towards the second half of the 80s, where he stayed for 10 years, directing various research projects, and contributing to the discovery of several drug candidates. During that period, his work on the molecular basis of allelic-specific anchors in class II major histocompatibility complex (HLA-DR) molecule-binding peptides for the recognition by $CD4^+$ T lymphocytes was of considerable importance and very innovative. These were among the first works that defined the concept of promiscuity by peptides, such as promiscuous peptides derived from a Plasmodium falciparum circumsporozoite protein, that could bind various diverse allele HLA-DR anchors and be presented to T cells from different donors. These data contributed to pave the way for the development of novel and still current prophylactic or therapeutic vaccine strategies against malaria across multiple healthy individuals or patients. In 1992, he founded and became the Scientific Director of Roche Milano Ricerche, a Roche Institute focusing on chronic inflammatory diseases, and then he co-founded with Luciano Adorini (another prominent Italian immunologist) the BioXell SpA, a biotech company of which he has served as chief executive officer and director since BioXell's inception in 2002, prevalently focused for developing monoclonal antibodies addressed to improve the treatment of inflammatory diseases or cancer. Specifically, the translational research in that period led to discoveries, important not only in terms of understanding the mechanisms of cellular interactions, but also for potential therapeutic implications in human diseases, such as the differential expression of chemokine receptors and chemotactic responsiveness of Th1 and Th2 cells, the selective expression of interleukin-12 receptor by human Th1 cells, and the role of Beta2-agonists in preventing Th1 development by selective IL-12 inhibition. His inspiring intrapreneur mindset in translating science into compounds with therapeutic potential, led Francesco to found a further biotech in an apparently different field, the Anabasis Srl, of which he has been CEO, dedicated to the development of innovative therapies for ophthalmic (eye) diseases, including neurotrophic keratitis, dry eye syndrome, retinitis pigmentosa, and glaucoma. In particular, the company's lead candidate was an ophthalmic formulation of Nerve Growth Factor (NGF), a discovery for which one of their scientific founders, Rita

Levi-Montalcini, won the Nobel Prize. The importance of this approach has been validated by the acquisition of Anabasis by the biopharm Dompè in 2012, developing the industrial production of recombinant human NGF (Cenegermin), leading to the approval for neurotrophic keratitis in both Europe and the United States.
In 2014, at Francesco's best and most successful moment, life took a dark and tragic turn in the guise of a terrible and irreversible disease: amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Francesco, one of the most energetic and simple-minded people I've ever met, faced the disease for more than 10 years without ever seeming to despair, with an unparalleled courage and faith in science. I met him personally as a great nature lover: an exceptional skier, mountaineer, and then also passionate about the sea thanks also to his incomparable wife Daria. Unfortunately, he lived in his seaside home in Salento, more as a martyr for such a devastating disease. Much is owed to the ever-loving support of Daria and his children, Francesca and Federico, because he endured it for so many years with incredible faith and desire to live.

Vincenzo Barnaba