

Obituary



Viviane Thévenin

It is with great sadness that the Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board of *Technology and Health Care* has to communicate that Dr. Vivian Thévenin passed away on November 30, 2002. Dr. Thévenin was a major and important promotor of the European Society for Engineering and Medicine (ESEM) as well as of *Technology and Health Care*.

Viviane Thévenin died on 30 November 2002, following a surgical operation. She was 51 and married to Mr. Noboru Kawai (n.kawai@hotmail.com). She had four children, the youngest of whom is 8 years old.

Viviane was born in France in 1951. A trained molecular biologist from the University of Paris, Viviane also had a master degree in English and a PhD in Research Policy. Following stints at Amherst College, New Jersey, and Oxford University, she joined the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in 1978, before being granted several fellowships, notably at the University of London (as a research associate), the Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Cientificas in Caracas, Venezuela and Johns Hopkins University.

Unusually for a French scientist, Viviane spoke English, Spanish, German, Russian and Japanese. In 1982, she joined the French ministry of Research and Industry. Within its Centre for Prospective and

Evaluation, she worked on comparing European, American and Japanese research policies. In 1983, she joined the Research services of the European Commission in Brussels, working as a scientific officer for the management of European Community-funded medical research. Towards 1986, she took over the area of Biomedical engineering – a domain that was in many respects a pioneer of European collaboration – and from then on until 1999, she remained the contact point in the “Brussels maze” for researchers and industrialists willing to submit projects in biomedical technologies, for experts invited to evaluate such project proposals and for the leaders of projects eventually funded under the Biomed Programme, its forerunners and heirs.

Viviane joined the European Commission when a handful of scientific officers were learning to distribute a few hundred thousands ECU in medical research; she leaves us when billions of EUR are now earmarked for European researchers and physicians. In the meantime, Viviane was instrumental in federating the scattered efforts of the Biomedical Engineering Community. She was involved in the setting up of ESEM, and remained its secretary for several years. She achieved the creation of an EC Expert Group on Biomedical Engineering and Technologies that managed to influence the decision makers at a crucial moment. She also supported the concept of demonstration projects, that proved an excellent opportunity for the domain (two thirds of the BIOMED 2 demonstration project being related to biomedical technologies). A discreet and self-effacing lady, Viviane was highly appreciated and respected, both by her colleagues and by the biomedical engineering community interested in European collaborations, the networking of which she greatly helped.

In 1999, after sixteen years working for EC-funded medical research, Viviane decided to move to other territories. She first worked for two years for the International Cooperation activities of the Research Directorate General, before taking up another challenge: that of enabling European researchers to work on the whole European Union territory without obstacle for their career, pension, social security, etc. In spite of a growing fatigue, Viviane was enjoying her new challenge.

Viviane knew how to listen. She expressed her views with a lot of conviction. Her judgement on individuals rarely failed her. She was also willing to advise younger colleagues on the snares of working in a specific environment such as the European Commission. Though not very ambitious, Viviane was really aware of the functioning of the Institution, both before and behind the curtain. Her professional objective was to serve Europe, its citizens and its research. She embodied, in many respects, a capacity to keep both feet firmly on the ground, while favouring all along her career values such as probity, honesty and loyalty. She will be sadly missed.

Olivier Le Dour
Scientific Officer
European Commission DG Research