

# Cancerworld

## World Cancer Day: we commemorate Professor Agim Sallaku

Alberto Costa / 3 February 2021



Since 2008, rallies around [World Cancer Day](#) on the 4th of February, support collective actions for a healthier world without cancer. The current Covid19 pandemic which placed the medical staff in the front line of leading the battle against the virus, is another reminder of their vital role in protecting and keeping us all safe.

While 2021 has been designated by the World Health Organization as the [International Year of Health and Care Workers \(YHCW\)](#), it is pertinent to recognize and remember the sacrifices of all the medical staff who work and have served every day to alleviate the pain of their patients and work for a healthier society.

The European School of Oncology would like to commemorate Professor Agim Sallaku, – an Albanian oncologist, who sadly died just over three years ago, and would have been 65 years old on the eve of the World Cancer Day. He is remembered as an inspiring and at the same time modest Doctor whose passion for oncology, dedication, commitment and compassion for his patients, motivated generations of doctors in Albania.

Prof. Dr. Agim Sallaku was born in Albania on February 5th in 1956. He belonged to a well-known intellectual family of Tirana, who faced persecution at the hands of the communist dictatorship. Despite many troubled years due to his family situation, he **committed to his passion to become a doctor** and achieved his medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tirana in 1981. In the same year he started working as a radiotherapist at the Oncological Service.

In 2004 he was appointed as Head of the Oncological Service where he passionately worked until the last days of his life in December 2017. During all the years of his leadership, the Service of Oncology evolved its approach towards cancer patients, converting into a multidisciplinary reference center. It was during these years and thanks to his dedication that radiotherapy treatment in Albania progressed from cobalt treatment to linear accelerator. As a Professor at the Faculty of Medicine he played a crucial role in establishing Clinical Oncology as a specialty course in this Faculty and trained also the first generation of medical oncologist in Kosovo. His colleagues and ex-students remember him as a mentor who was always trying to identify new opportunities for his staff to elevate their strengths and improve their skills in different specialties of oncology.

In 1993 he was one of the founders of the SUE RYDER Albania Association, an NGO offering free of charge care to palliative patients. Modesty and compassion were at the basis of Doctor Sallaku's approach to patients. Indeed, his former patients (nowadays cancer survivors) perceived him as a meticulous doctor, whom in their most vulnerable moments instead of fear, guided his patients to see hope for life.

In what proved to be his last days of life, Prof. Sallaku continued working and serving his patients at the Oncologic hospital in Tirana.

He was the author of several text books and many international scientific articles. He played an important role in organizing several international conferences in collaboration with the European School of Oncology, ESMO, IAEA and others.

Prof. Dr. Sallaku is one of the many examples of oncologists who worked in silence by dedicating their life to the battle against cancer, improving the life of cancer patients.