

## In Memoriam: René Fiasse (1936-2024)

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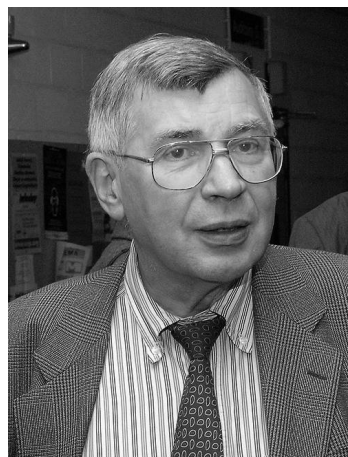
### To the Editor,

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Professor René Fiasse on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2024, at the age of 87.

Born in Quiévrain in 1936 in the Borinage region, to two teachers, he was the eldest of four children. From an early age, he developed a quality that would mark him throughout his life: a committed humanism. Struck by the horrors of war, he became interested in international politics and then became actively involved in the pacifist movements and Amnesty International. Having received a pluralist education and thanks to his open-mindedness, he was always ahead of his time when it came to major ethical issues.

In his desire to help others, and perhaps because of the motto of Socrates inscribed beneath his bust in his school, he began studying medicine, which he completed in 1960. He pursued his career in internal medicine at the Hôpital St-Pierre in Louvain. He then trained in the United States from 1964 to 1966 (New York Medical College for research in gastroenterology and Metropolitan Hospital for clinical work). He published several manuscripts with George Jerzy Glass and Charles Code and contributed to the fractionation and purification of a new candidate hormone, gastrone (1). He also studied the effect of anti-parietal cell antibodies in atrophic gastritis. Back in Louvain and then Louvain-en-Woluwe, under the direction of Professor Charles Dive, he developed the gastroenterology department at Cliniques universitaires Saint-Luc. There he developed the functional test laboratory (oesophageal manometry, gastric and pancreatic secretion tests,...) and oeso-gastric endoscopy. His clinical practice has focused on diseases of the oesophagus (achalasia, peptic stenosis,...), chronic inflammatory bowel diseases and neuroendocrine tumours of the digestive tract.

Besides taking care of patients with great patience and empathy, René Fiasse was also extremely committed to disseminating his encyclopaedic knowledge and reading to colleagues and younger people. He trained many of us to join science, advances in medicine, and up-to-date patient care. An active member of the "Société Royale Belge de Gastro-Entérologie", of which he was General Secretary from 1992 to 1996, René Fiasse founded the "Belgian Week of Gastroenterology" in 1988 (2). This first congress was held in March 1989 at the Palais des



René Fiasse  
(photograph taken in 2005)

Congrès in Liège. He was responsible for all the scientific coordination (joint meeting and link between all the scientific societies). He also introduced the publication of abstracts in the *Acta Gastro-Enterologica Belgica*, which Georges Brohée had created (2,3). This annual congress is the only in the field of gastroenterology that brings together all the scientific societies and research groups, over and above linguistic differences. It is still held today, welcoming hundreds of scientists from Belgium and elsewhere. From 1986 to 1990, he was editor-in-chief of the "*Acta Gastro-Enterologica Belgica*" (3,4). He took this role very much to heart. He attached great importance to the dissemination of knowledge and remained very attentive to scientific publications right up to the end of his life. For many years, he was also the secretary of the "Fonds Georges Brohée", a charity fund created to promote research in the field of gastroenterology through granting a biannual prize (5). In 2000, he was heavily involved in organising the European Gastroenterology Congress in Brussels.

Beyond Belgium's borders, he was particularly involved in the development of the Catholic University

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of Bukavu, organising post-graduate training for African doctors at various Belgian universities and setting up high-quality specialist medical teaching there in collaboration with several colleagues from Cliniques universitaires Saint-Luc. In recognition of this work, the Catholic University of Bukavu awarded him the insignia of Doctor Honoris Causa in 2020.

René Fiasse was also the linchpin of the association of patients suffering from Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Even many years after his emeritus, René Fiasse continued to be actively involved in all his just social, ethical, educational and scientific battles. He leaves behind inspiring memories for many generations of doctors.

On behalf of the St-Luc Hepatogastroenterology Department, the Fonds Georges Brohée board, the Société Royale Belge de Gastro-Entérologie, the Acta Gastro-Enterologica Belgica and the Belgian Week of

Gastroenterology, we would like to pay tribute to him, thank him for everything he has left us and extend our sincere condolences to his family.

**Keywords:** Belgian Week of Gastroenterology, Belgium, Gastroenterology, Fonds Brohée, Acta Gastroenterologica Belgica.

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