



COLLEGIUM RAMAZZINI



TOWN OF CARPI

The Collegium Ramazzini and the Town of Carpi are proud to recognize

## KAREL VAN DAMME, MD

*as Ramazzini Award recipient and Ramazzini Lecturer for 2017.*

Dr. Karel Van Damme has had a remarkable career in occupational medicine. He has dedicated his life's work to improving the ethical basis for screening and monitoring practices and to improving occupational safety and health protections for workers in Belgium and around the world.

Dr. Van Damme received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Leuven, followed by further training in internal medicine and occupational medicine. His interest in occupational health began in medical school. Elected to represent all students at the national level, he was devoted to closing the gap between the university and the world of workers. During this time he also organized for medical students a study pneumoconiosis in coal miners. He then spent ten years as a Medical Labour Inspector for the Belgian government where he promoted the first Belgian regulation on asbestos removal. This was followed by five years as a Research Officer at the European Trade Union Technical Bureau for Health and Safety where he advocated to improve the EU's health and safety regulations on carcinogens and other workplace hazards. He then returned to the Belgian Ministry of Employment and Labour as Director at the Medical Labour Inspectorate. From 1991 until 2003, he served also as President of the Belgian Compensation Fund for Occupational Diseases.

From 2003 to 2011, Dr. Van Damme represented Belgium as a member of the Senior Labour Inspector's Committee of the European Commission, where he contributed considerably to better collaboration between European Labour Inspection Services. From 2003 to 2007, and then again from late 2011 to 2014, he served as personal advisor to the Belgian Federal Minister of Labour. During the interval between those positions, he was General Councilor at the Federal Public Service on Employment, Labour, and Social Dialogue where he developed a plan for protecting workers in precarious conditions.

Dr. Van Damme has participated actively in research and training in occupational health at the University of Antwerp and, most recently (since 1995), as a Researcher in the Center for Human Genetics at the University of Leuven. His research has included blood disorders and cancer risks in industrial settings. This research helped to provide the basis for better regulation of benzene exposures. He has also worked to elucidate the scientific and ethical basis for genetic screening and biomonitoring in occupational health.

In addition to his work in Belgium and in the EU, Dr. Van Damme has been involved in international consultations and conferences in many countries, including Armenia, Brazil, China, Columbia, India, Turkey, and Zimbabwe, and he continues to serve as an external expert for ILO. He is the chair of the Collegium Ramazzini's Ethics Committee and a former member of the Collegium's Executive Council.

Dr. Van Damme has always been guided by a strong moral compass. He has worked consistently and tirelessly in his research and in his government service to improve working conditions, prevent workplace illnesses and injuries, and ensure proper compensation for men and women who are injured or become ill because of their work. Throughout his professional life Karel has been a true follower of Bernardo Ramazzini and a treasured colleague and friend to all Ramazzinians.

Carpi, October 28, 2017

PHILIP J. LANDRIGAN, M.D.  
President

MORANDO SOFFRITTI, M.D.  
Secretary General

ALBERTO BELLELLI  
Mayor of Carpi

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