



Areles Molleman
1960 - 2012

Areles Molleman was a respected researcher, teacher and administrator, who died suddenly in his sleep in the early hours of 3 September, 2012.

He was born and grew up in Voorschoten in The Netherlands, the youngest of a family of five. His early life was characterised by a love of nature which led to tears being shed when his mother cut off the daisies' heads while mowing the lawn, and by a love of aeroplanes, basketball and electronics. Areles went on to complete his BSc in Biology in 1984, followed by an MSc in Neurophysiology in 1986, at the University of Leiden. As part of his MSc studies he started developing his educational interests through taking didactics for biology. These rigorous academic pursuits were complemented by a fluent knowledge of many European languages in addition to Dutch and English. Then followed a PhD in the pharmacology of smooth muscle using electrophysiological techniques (1993) at the University of Groningen supervised by A. Den Hertog where he developed an interest in receptor pharmacology and receptor transduction mechanisms.

He then moved to Canada as a Research Associate in Gastrointestinal Smooth muscle (1990-1993) at McMaster University in Hamilton Ontario. Working in J. D. Huizinga's group he contributed to our understanding of the mechanisms of cellular communication in smooth muscle. While at McMaster he also undertook their course in Problem Based Learning, a student-centred approach pioneered at the university in the teaching of their medical students in the late 1960s. This, as much as his research, was to influence the path taken by his future career.

After Canada, Areles moved to the Pharmacology Department at the University of Bristol as a Research Associate in Neuroscience (1993-1997) working with Hilary Little and Graeme Henderson applying electrophysiological techniques to the study of neuronal membrane changes following chronic ethanol administration. Ironically, despite this scientific interest, Areles remained a non-drinker throughout his life, sometimes asking research students to buy his fruit juices on social occasions in pubs.

Areles subsequently joined the academic staff of the Physiology and Pharmacology Group in the then Division of Biosciences, School of Life Sciences (now School of Life and Medical Sciences), at the University of Hertfordshire. Here he contributed significantly to the work of the School, continuing his research and developing his teaching and administrative activities. He collaborated with Mike Parsons, Cliff Whelan, Anwar Baydoun and Chris Benham in Pharmacology and Rudiger Hasenöhrl and Gunner Thiemann in Psychology, in a range of projects relating to signal transduction mechanisms of cannabinoid CB receptors, possible therapeutic applications of cannabinoids on immune function in the airways and gastrointestinal tract, and the role of the cannabinoid system in brain reward. His collaborative work was not confined to the University but included Professor Roger Pertwee (University of Aberdeen), Dr Ad Nelemans (University of Groningen), Dr Vincenzo Di Marzo (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Naples) and Professor Jan Huizinga (McMaster University). Areles successfully supervised student research at BSc, MSc and PhD levels. Malcolm Begg, one of his early Ph.D. students, and now a research scientist at GlaxoSmithKline, Stevenage, has written of how Areles' enthusiasm and passion for research was contagious, with constant motivation to work hard and own his research, while attention to detail became, by example, a vital element of his subsequent career within the Pharma industry. Like many others, Malcolm speaks of the huge debt owed to Areles for encouragement, coaching and leadership.

To share his experimental knowledge and experience more widely Areles wrote the book: **“Patch Clamping: An Introductory Guide to Patch Clamp Electrophysiology”**, published in 2002. This self-contained guide is written in a non-technical style, designed to appeal to novices.

Areles also sustained his interest in learning and teaching and their development, being seconded as a Principal Lecturer to the University Learning and Teaching Institute, where he worked alongside Helen Barefoot, Deputy Head of the LTI, herself a neuroscientist, and member of the Physiology and Pharmacology Group. Prior to the establishment of the LTI, Areles had contributed to the work of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching on an informal basis for a number of years - his passion for Learning and Teaching led him to give freely of his time and expertise to support colleagues from around the University. He was then seconded to the LTI for three years and during this time he led the module “Developing Learning, Teaching and Assessment” which enabled participants to consider how the pedagogic literature informed their own teaching practice. Areles contributed to a wide range of LTI development and leadership activities including presenting his own learning and teaching research at national and International conferences and supporting staff at overseas partner Institutions to develop their teaching.

Areles also developed learning, teaching and assessment within the School of Life Sciences. Here he made a major contribution to the introduction of problem based learning to MSc programmes within the School by teaching his colleagues the principles of this method. He was a winner of an Academic Quality Enhancement Award by the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences (2008) for his work on raising student awareness of the importance of work experience and his scheme to prepare them for the recruitment process and employment. Thus, well before the current rumblings about educational policy, his strongly-held democratic political views included a belief that a vocational training should be valued as much in society as a purely academic training. He was a popular lecturer at all levels both within the University and in courses developed for the pharmaceutical industry.

The administrative responsibilities undertaken by Areles included Head of the Division of Biosciences, a significant position in which he provided strong leadership to staff within the division as well as supervising the delivery of the teaching of the discipline. Other responsibilities reflected, in part, his international experience, for instance as Placement and Student Exchange Coordinator for establishments in Sweden, Spain and The Netherlands, as well as his interest in learning and

teaching as the Programme Tutor for the Continuous Professional Academic Development Programme (CPAD) PgCert programme.

In all his working activities, Areles, paid attention to detail and had a common sense approach to his duties which he went about in a calm efficient manner. He was willing to share his experience with others, dealing with colleagues in discussion with a Dutch directness, and abstaining from what he would describe as English apologetic circumlocution. His desire for order was evident in his meticulously tidy desktop, as well as his removal of skin and pith from citrus fruits at lunch-time when he would spend more time on the process than on eating the fruit. The breadth of his professional life is summed up by his membership of the British Pharmacological Society and the International Cannabinoid Research Society, Recognised Teacher, Cranfield University and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Areles led a full life outside the University. He drew a clear line between his professional commitment and his leisure-time activities which were many and various, thus sustaining a balanced and generous approach to life. He had a warm, friendly and fun-loving personality, with a keen sense of humour, and a large circle of friends with whom he shared his interests. These included obtaining a private pilot's licence and subsequently undertaking aerobatic flying, in the vicinity of the local Panshanger aerodrome, thus living his childhood dream of flying. He was also an accomplished tenor and baritone saxophonist, held in much affection by the salsa band Orquesta La Rebellion with whom he played regularly from their founding. Despite having spent a large part of his life away from his country of birth, Areles remained staunchly proud of his Dutch origins, enriching our lives by teaching us subtleties of expression and behaviour. His sudden death has deprived us of a much valued friend and colleague. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Areles is survived by his wife, Corrie, to whom we extend our deepest sympathies.

John Wilkinson, Vasanta Raman, and Helen Barefoot
University of Hertfordshire