

Dear Friends,

many of you are aware that my mother in law, after trying to battle with uterine cancer for almost three years, passed away two weeks ago and that these past two weeks have been very difficult for me and my American family.

While I feel a bit strange to tell you the experiences that I had during that week, I'll do it anyway because I think that, however painful they are, some of these experiences might touch you in some way...and hopefully, they might enable you to understand and see that, despite the pain we feel at certain moments of our life, there is always a ray of hope that awaits us somewhere ... and that, sometimes, it is up to us to find...

On February 7th, my husband's mother passed away surrounded by friends and family in her house, three years after the death of her husband, who was also suffering from cancer. When he passed three years ago, I was in the hospital with my first MS attack. This time I was present to everything that happened and I could feel the pain that such an event made us feel.

I didn't have the heart of a confused and frightened young woman who had just discovered she had a serious illness such as multiple sclerosis and that was facing her first encounter with it. This time, I knew exactly what to expect from my disease, but I didn't yet understand how hard it was losing a person who has been part of my life over the past 13 years and that has always represented a lot for my husband, for his sister and the whole family.

As much as we are told that it is possible to prepare for the death of a loved one, I can say that it is not an easy thing to do and that there are no words to express the sorrow we feel at seeing a loved one who is suffering and which must soon say farewell.

Despite the events that had occurred during the first days of the week, I was aware that Dr. Zamboni would come to present his amazing discovery at the University of New York City on February 9. I was aware of this fact for quite some time and I had waited and dreamed of going to listen to him every day from that moment on, but life decided otherwise...And, there was still a bit of hope in my heart,

when I saw the lifeless body of my mother-in-law, I realized that I wasn't going to be able to meet him.

A few days before I had written to Dr. Zamboni and I had told him that I was going to be present and did not want to disappoint him, especially when I read his answer where he was telling me to come to support him and cheer for him!

I didn't want to break my word and I wanted to find the ray of light in all the pain! And when I heard the warm words of my husband who told me that he agreed with me that we needed to find something that was going to keep hope in our heart, I realized that we were going to go and that I could meet one of my heroes!

On February 9, just before ten-thirty in the morning, I was ready to meet that ray of hope!

I was sitting in the large room devoted to presentations in the Farkas Auditorium at New York University. There were several other people there, even if there was another half an hour before the presentation and I found a place in the front row. I was excited, happy, hopeful ... my heart was pounding and I did nothing but keep turning around so I would not miss the moment when the doctor would come into the room.

Fifteen minutes before the conference, I turned to look behind and to my surprise, I saw him coming and my smile became even more is great.

Since I was shocked, I think I caught his attention because I immediately looked into his eyes, he returned my smile and exclaimed, "Angela!" like he had know me for a very long time! I immediately got up and went to meet him, and when he was a few feet away from me, he told me he had to go and check the slides on the screen so I knew it was not the right time to talk and I sat back down as I continued to smile. It seemed that every cell of my body was following the example of my lips: everything was smiling with me! I felt happy, strong and hopeful like I hadn't felt in quite some time and I knew I had made the right choice. I felt that my husband's mother was happy for us and that she was right next to us. I felt that this was the right thing to do and the smile on our lips was the sign of a step into the future ... the future of a world without multiple

sclerosis.

Dr. Zamboni spoke for 45 minutes and during that time I cried, I smiled, I held my hands in a sign of prayer (the right hand is always cold like an icicle and I try in vain to warm it up!) and I was submerged by a wave of gratitude.

Despite the recent years that have been at times a real "hell" (due to the loss of my husband's parents and of my "active" MS) I cannot forget to remember the many beautiful moments that I've had with the presence of this disease in my life.

I will never forget looking into the eyes of a doctor who, through the love he feels for his wife and his deep desire to help others, has unveiled an amazing mystery that will help many of us.

Dr. Zamboni spoke about CCSVI and its role in multiple sclerosis while everyone listened in deep silence.

Dr. Salvi was sitting behind me next to a couple of young Italians, and even if I turned a couple of times before the doctor began to speak, I could not do anything else but to smile ...and I could not say a word! Around us, there were important people in the medical world regarding neurology and immunology, there were several students and some patients were present and I think some cardiologists. I noticed the research director of the American MS Society whose picture always appears in magazines. Many in the room were there to ask questions and to "criticize" the theory of Dr. Zamboni, but like he says, this is a good sign ... it means that because people are asking questions, they are considering the theory and are not indifferent to it!

I was annoyed to hear some expressions and be surrounded by skeptical people, but I understand that this is much better than having total indifference or silence that would make things even more difficult.

As you know, through YouTube and Facebook, I am in contact with people from around the world and people living in Australia, the United States and Canada, who do nothing but talk of Dr. Zamboni and CCSVI.

Anyway, back to the presentation. What struck me the most was when he said that Chronic Cerebral Spinal Venous Insufficiency occurs in the first months of life and this tells us that that we are born

this way and there is reason to believe that CCSVI is the cause of MS and not a consequence, although we are still looking for the proof. Many cases of CCSVI in patients with multiple sclerosis have valves that are opposed and that are not "normal" and cause reflux. Valves are closed when they should be open. The veins are twisted and valves are discharged and this cannot be caused by multiple sclerosis.

Another thing that struck me is when he said that CCSVI can cause infiltration of the blood brain barrier, causing a micro-bleeding. It is possible that multiple sclerosis is a degenerative disease rather than being an autoimmune disease and there are very few T and B cells that infiltrate the blood barrier.

During the presentation, he also explained how the world of neurology and cardiology do not communicate at all, and that it is necessary to combine the two worlds in order to promote studies and find a treatment and a cure for the disease.

At the end of the presentation, we were allowed to ask questions and other doctors made comments and requested clarification on several issues. It was in those moments that I felt the skepticism.

While I don't like hearing them, the criticisms are helpful, they make us think and allow us to get closer to solution to this problem.

Dr. Zamboni answered every question that was asked with patience and passion. He was able to explain everything and to clarify his findings and his thoughts.

At the end of the meeting, I left the room and waited for him to be interviewed by two popular American television networks, CBS and ABC. I waited patiently with a smile on my lips aware that very soon, I could thank him in person.

Having finally found the courage to speak to Dr. Salvi and ask him to take a picture together (and he kept asking me why I wanted a picture with him) I was beside him, I was able to meet a nice and kind woman that works for the University and who is Italian. While I was waiting, I was talking with Dr. Salvi, who made me laugh

a few times and he surprised me a lot with his humorous comments. One of the things that made me laugh was when I was talking about Flowers4MS and he asked me what it meant and whether the flowers were for the dead!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I must admit that this was the first time a person responded to my project this way, and since I had not expected it, I started to laugh again and I could not stop because I found it really funny! This is the type of Italian humor that I miss so much!

He continued to make many comments and jokes and I understood that his personality was cheerful, easy going and friendly. I can assure you that you would feel quite comfortable with Dr. Salvi! When I saw that Dr. Zamboni had finished speaking to the young woman, I did not move but I waited for him to call me and when he said "Angela, come, come" I immediately went to him and gave him a big hug.

I immediately joked and asked if I seemed like a good fan and he laughed reassuring me that I was!

I then moved on to thank him, to make him understand how important it is what he's doing and how much I appreciate all his work and his determination to help all of us. Then it was time for the photos. Before leaving, I gave him a box of Flowers4MS cards that I had brought with me and he showed me he remembered my project. He was very human and kind, full of sensitivity and warmth and I know that I will never forget our meeting!

I think I've really looked into the eyes of hope...