

Egidio Tosatti

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Egidio Tosatti and treatment of lymphatic disorders

Prof. Egidio Tosatti was born in Parma (April 7, 1913), son of a surgeon, Prof. Carlo Tosatti, and noblewoman, the Countess Bianca Bartolomasi. Following in his father's footsteps, Prof. Tosatti obtained a degree in Medicine & Surgery from Parma in 1936. He was also a civil pilot of the Air Force and awardee of the bronze medal for military valor in the field in 1944. Aside from his obvious medical interests, Prof. Tosatti was a renowned bibliophile, especially of poetry, and an enthusiastic art lover.

With regard to his illustrious career in Lymphology, Prof. Tosatti was the Director of the Department of Surgery at the University of Siena in the 1950s, working at the Pellegrinaio Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. Here, Prof. Tosatti had acquired *direct* knowledge of the anatomical studies conducted by Mascagni, and he started the wonderful journey of Modern Italian Lymphology.¹ At that time Prof. Tosatti was President of the Medical Section of the *Accademia dei Fisiocritici* (1959-1965) and, above all, intrigued by the studies conducted by the Great Master Mascagni, he had the idea of getting some anatomic samples X-rayed. Both deep and superficial lymphatic vessels in these samples had been prepared by Mascagni with an injection of mercury, by means of a glass micro-needle cannula obtained with microsurgical accuracy with a Bunsen burner. Mercury was injected into the foot lymphatic vessels while the surgeon had to keep his hand quite firm (*cubito bene firmato*). It was the dawn of lymphology, marking the beginning of a new age of studies and research of the lymphatic system, which would lead to the definition and, later, the *standardization of lymphographic diagnostics*.

His studies continued in Genoa, when he became a Professor of Surgery in 1965, the same year that he founded the Italian Society of Lymphangiography, of which he was the chairman until his death in 1990. In the 1970s, Prof. Tosatti entered into a fervent period of study into the disorders of the lymphatic system, founding the Center for the Study Prevention, and Therapy of Lymphatic Disease and the Teaching of

Microsurgery in Genoa (Figure 1).²⁻¹⁰

This research work included the development of a lymphedema classification system, that was noted for its rational pathophysiological approach to the disease etiology. He also developed several pioneering surgical approaches, including the method of the anti-gravitational binding of ectasic and insufficient lymphatic vessels in primary lymphedema of the lower limbs due to gravitational reflux.

During his later years, Prof. Tosatti was one of the first to recognize the potential of microsurgery for the treatment of lymphedema and offered an highlighted contribution for the development of the lymphatic-venous microsurgical reconstruction of lymphatic vessels.¹¹⁻³⁰ He always believed in a complete therapy and devised a personal treatment program of prolonged and intensive mechanical lymphatic drainage for the treatment of chronic lymphedema.

His lifetime achievements were immense and too numerous to list. He was indeed a deeply inspiring man, particularly for his humanistic values and his eloquence in delivering inspiring university and congress lectures. Prof. Tosatti will forever be remembered by those who knew him, and even by those who were fortunate enough to meet him, for his love and sacred respect for the patients, especially those who *no surgeon would ever want*, for those patients that require complex and protracted care, such as those with advanced elephantiasis.³¹⁻⁵⁰

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For all these qualities, Prof. Tosatti will live forever in our hearts and memories.

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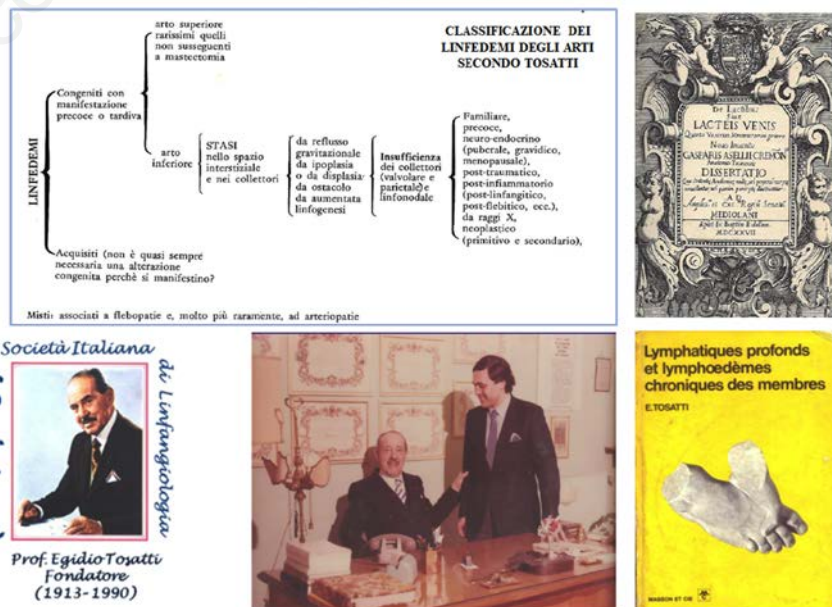


Figure 1. The historical steps of Prof. Egidio Tosatti, together with his pupil, Prof. Corradino Campisi, leaders of Lymphology in Italy, Europe and all over the world.

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