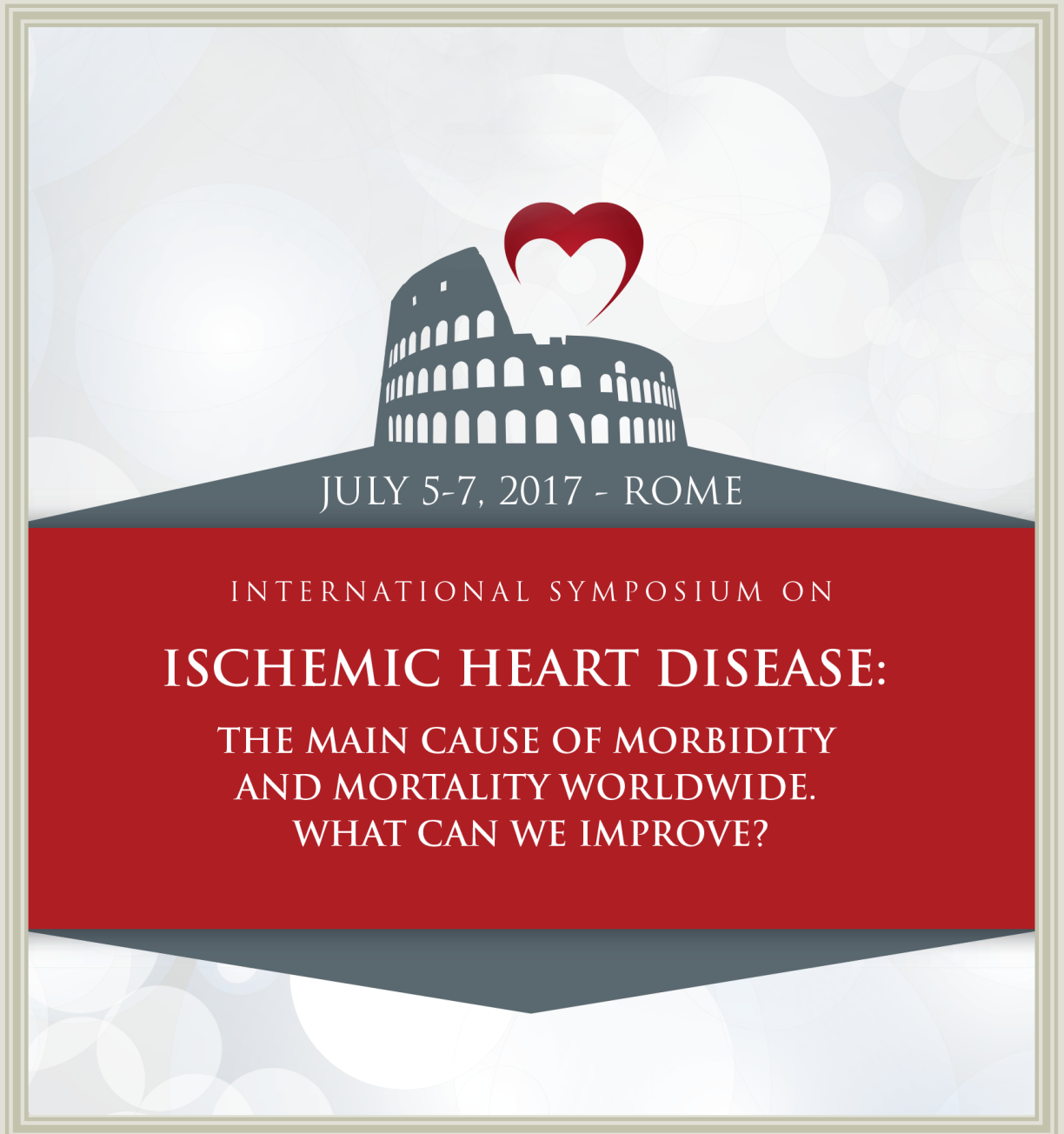




FONDAZIONE  
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MENARINI

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VILLA AURELIA  
Historical notes





The University and the Department of Cardiology of the General Hospital "Foundation Policlinico Agostino Gemelli" in cooperation with the Catholic University Sacro Cuore of Rome organize on July 5th-7th the International Symposium on "*Ischemic Heart Disease: the main cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. What can we improve*".

It is the 344<sup>th</sup> scientific conference promoted by Fondazione Internazionale Menarini and it is chaired by Professor Filippo Crea, Director of the Department of Cardiovascular and Toracic Sciences at the Policlinico Agostino Gemelli and the Catholic University Sacro Cuore of Rome, with the participation of distinguished and famous specialists in cardiology.

The whole event is held in the baroque halls of Villa Aurelia, a seventeenth-century mansion nestled in the green on the Gianicolo (Janiculum hill) located on the right bank of the Tiber River. It is the second-highest hill in Rome after the Quirinale and one of the most scenic spots in the "Eternal City". In ancient times it was known as Mons Aureus, or



"Monte d'Oro" (Mountain of Gold) because of the golden reflections of its yellow sands. For centuries, it remained outside the City of Rome and was not part of the fabled "Seven Hills" around which Ancient Rome was built, until, between 270 and 275, a small offshoot of it was included in the Aurelian Walls built to defend the entire city from the threat of barbarians defeated by Emperor Aurelian. Today it is called the eighth hill of Rome and the name Gianicolo comes from the belief that in ancient times it was the place where the two-faced god Janus was worshipped. Janus had several

children, and from one of them, Tiberino, derives the name of Tevere (Tiber in Latin), the sacred River of the Romans.

The hill is located between the Vatican and the characteristic Trastevere district that is the most authentic quarter of the city and an ancient and contemporary emblem of the "Roman" flavour. The name Trastevere comes from the Latin *trans Tiberim*, i.e. beyond the Tiber River. In ancient Rome, it was the poorest area, a settlement for Syrian and Jewish communities. Over the centuries, it became home to the villas of important people like Caesar and Agrippa and today it is nicknamed "er core de Roma" (the heart of Rome) and has become one of the favourite places by the Roman nightlife.



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Villa Aurelia, the venue of the congress, is next to the imposing Porta San Pancrazio, called Porta Aurelia to Roman times. It was one of the southern gates of the Aurelian Walls from where the ancient consular Aurelia Vetus started and branched to Pisa along the Tyrrhenian coast. The gate houses today the National Association of Garibaldi Veterans and Survivors along with the Garibaldi Museum (also dedicated to the Italian Partisan Division "Garibaldi", operating between 1943 and 1945). It is a place of remembrance, which bears witness to the history and the battles for the Italian



Unification, known in Italy as the Risorgimento. The gate became famous for the combats that took place in the area, in the period April - June 1849, between the military units of the Roman Republic, captained by Giuseppe Garibaldi, and the French troops of General Nicolas Charles Victor Oudinot intervened to restore Pope Pius IX who took refuge in Gaeta. The "war memorial park" on top of the Janiculum hill is home to the equestrian monument in honour of Giuseppe Garibaldi flanked by the allegorical figures of Europe and America to remind the acts of the "Hero of the

Two Worlds". Besides him, to commemorate those lost in the battles of 1849 there are an Ossuary War Memorial, the busts of Garibaldi's heroes and a statue of Righetto, the Roman boy who tried to defuse the French bombs with bare hands.



The name Aurelia of the rose and gold colored villa comes from its last owner, the American Lady Clara Jessup from Philadelphia, wife of the English officer Alexander Heyland. She named the mansion Aurelia because it rests on the Aurelian walls, on a terraced hillside. She bought it in 1885 from the Monte di Pietà ((Pawn Mount) and restructured it enlarging both the interior and the garden introducing wisteria, palm trees, cactuses, pines, oaks and a water tower

shaped like a Romanesque bell tower. Before her, the house was a noble country estate named after various owners who gradually succeeded. The Villa was first built on the highest point of the hill between 1650 and 1667 in Baroque style for Cardinal Girolamo Farnese of Parma who was the governor of Rome at that time. It remained property of the Farnese family until 1731, when it passed under the control of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon "King of the Two Sicilies" before being acquired in 1774 by Count Ferdinando Giraud. In 1841, Giraud sold the property to Count Alessandro Savorelli from Forlì. He undertook numerous works to enlarge and restore the noble estate under the direction



of his father-in-law, the architect Virginio Vespignani who also reconstructed Porta San Pancrazio from 1854 to 1857. In 1849, during the French invasion of the Roman Republic, the Villa, with its advantageous position, was used as the headquarters of General Garibaldi. As a result, the mansion was heavily bombed. In 1885, it was purchased by



Lady Jessup Heyland who bequeathed the property to the American Academy in Rome in 1909. The overseas institution is still the today's owner and gathers into a single Academy the American School of Architecture and the American School of Classical Studies with the purpose to promote the study and research in the field of fine arts and humanities. Immediately after the Second World War, in 1946-47, the Academy started restoration work on the property managed by the Academy Director Laurenze Roberts and by the Italian architect Bruno Zevi to transform the villa into the headquarters of cultural events organized by the Academy, such as concerts and conferences. Since 2002, the Villa is also open to the public.

Since its construction, Villa Aurelia appeared to be a two-story building with large arches on the main floor and large windows overlooking the beautiful view of Rome. The large original windows are still framed by stucco reliefs representing garlands, shells and vault finishes. Inside, the property has several large rooms on various levels with ceilings decorated with carved wooden chests in relief. The walls are decorated with paintings and grotesque attributed to two Baroque painters: Filippo Lauri of Flemish origin and the Austrian Giovan Paolo Schor, called "il Tedesco", who were very active in Rome throughout 1700. The fine wood floors are decorated in geometric style and two-tone marbles and represent the work of Roman artisans of 1800. The large outdoor garden is dotted with fountains: the Ninfea Fountain, the Pigna Fountain, the Ape Fountain and the Millicent Fountain, plus a secret garden from which to enjoy the glimpses of Rome's roofs that appear through the pergolas.

Particular is the courtyard in front of the main facade that is decorated with a parterre of chess in which squares of grass and gravel panels alternate and where a collection of lemon trees in Impruneta terracotta pottery pots is exposed.



## The Gianicolo Cannon

For the last 58 years, every day at exactly noon, the famous cannon on Gianicolo Hill fires a blank shot in the direction of the Tiber. It is a tradition that dates back to 1847, when the cannon of the Castel Sant'Angelo gave the signal for the surrounding bell towers and churches to ring at exactly midday. The signal was used in order to avoid having the bells ring at various times since their clocks may be off by a few minutes. This ritual was transferred to the Gianicolo in 1904, and continued until 1939 when it was stopped due to the outbreak of war. The practice was resumed 20 years later, in 1959 after a popular appeal to the Commune of Rome was passed.



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