Italian physicist Ettore Pancini died prematurely on 1 September. In 1946, with Marcello Conversi and Oreste Piccioni, he discovered that the cosmic ray meson (the muon), contrary to general belief at the time, could not be the particle postulated by Hideki Yukawa as the carrier of the short range nuclear force. By establishing that the muon behaves as a heavy electron, these experiments opened up the field of leptonic physics. This work also led to the idea of a universal weak interaction, and pointed the way to the study of mesic atoms.

After graduating from Padua, in 1940 Ettore Pancini went to Rome to study cosmic ray physics, a career which was soon interrupted by the war in which he went on to play an important role. In 1950 he was appointed Professor of Experimental Physics at Genoa, which during his ten year residence became a centre of international renown. He then moved to Naples. An original and rationalistic thinker and a gifted experimentalist, he continually provided stimulus for further research.