

EDITORIAL

[Translated article] Remembering José M. de Moragas Viñas (1925–2023)



Recuerdo a José M. de Moragas Viñas (1925-2023)



When the board of directors of the Spanish Academy of Dermatology and Venereology asked me to write an obituary for Dr. Josep M. de Moragas Viñas, I felt especially fortunate. However, I wanted my colleagues and Dr. Moragas' direct disciples to have the opportunity to express their own thoughts as well, so I will begin with a brief account of his life, focusing mainly on his academic achievements, and then we will all participate.

Dr. J.M. de Moragas received his medical degree from the University of Barcelona in 1949. He held a fellowship in dermatology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, from 1954 to 1957. The training he received there turned his professional career around completely, influencing his work throughout his life.

He obtained his PhD in 1958 and worked for years at the Hospital Clínic de Barcelona with Professors x. Vilanova and J. Piñol, whom he never failed to mention in his reminiscences.

From 1972 to 1996, Dr. Moragas was head of the dermatology department of the Hospital Santa Creu i Sant Pau in

Barcelona, where he left his mark on a school of practice that formed around him.

He was both an active and honorary member of many scientific societies and coauthored more than 470 publications in high-ranking journals on dermatology and other specialties. He became full professor of medicine at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 1985.

A passionate mountain climber and a great skier, Dr. Moragas was able to share many Easter holidays with his family in Zermatt, his favorite ski resort. At his home in Mal Pas, Mallorca, he enjoyed beginning each summer day swimming with his neighbors, the cormorants.

His scientific rigor and personal charisma influenced all of us in one way or another, and 12 of his disciples went on to become heads of dermatology departments at different hospitals.

His knowledge and international contacts helped to put the dermatology department at Hospital de Sant Pau on the map both nationally and internationally.

Some of the many he trained would like to add a few comments of our own about him below. I begin with my own.

Among Dr. Moragas' many qualities I would single out his desire to stay abreast of advances in dermatology and in medicine in general. He maintained his desire to learn throughout his life, and enjoyed sharing his knowledge with those around him, for which we all owe him our deepest thanks.

María A. Barnadas

I would like to remember José M. not only as my dermatology professor, but as a friend and wonderful person. He knew how to transmit to his entire team his passion for our specialty and the need to keep learning. Thanks to him, I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship

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to study in San Francisco, in the US. He taught us the importance of prioritizing the patient in all our clinical work. As a person, he was unassuming and approachable — yet always very strict professionally — and managed to find time for family, friends, and sports.

A fond farewell to you, “Chief.”

Dr. Javier Noguera Tusquets

The Chief has left us — the doctor, the professor, the teacher, my “father” in the profession, a very important model in my life — the person who molded my career in dermatology, offering me possibilities and opportunities to continue learning and to prosper.

From him I learned how to handle every visit in the clinic and treat each patient with scientific rigor and humanity.

After 42 years by his side, I have picked up many of his ways and expressions and use them when talking with patients — ways of behaving that you don’t learn from books or in medical school.

Thank you, Chief!!! Rest in peace.

Montserrat Pérez, MD

Small in frame, but large in spirit, Dr. Moragas was a man who commanded respect and admiration for his knowledge and *savoir faire*. More light-hearted than serious, disciplined, courteous, and precise, but amiable and always ready to help and understand. His love of American culture and way of life, so characteristic of the Catalan bourgeoisie, influenced the way he spoke to, diagnosed, and treated his patients.

REMEMBERED AND ADMIRERED, with my gratitude forever.

J.M. García Marques (Pitu)

You go to the dermatology department to ask for information, and you’re welcomed with open arms by the department head, Professor Moragas. He asks about your experience, and transmits the passion he feels for our beloved specialty. He explains what your residency will be like, talks about your future possibilities, that thesis that you’d never even thought of doing. He makes you feel that you’re at the “Mayo” while he points out with his characteristic smile that it is not all about lupus or vasculitis, that you have to study, give presentations, publish, work hard every day. That first contact with the professor marked my professional future. My enormous gratitude to this brilliant, hard-working, and sports-loving boss, who enjoyed sharing his knowledge and broadening ours, who demanded good manners and good work, encouraged our professional growth, healthy habits, and self-confidence. Rest in peace, dear Professor.

Anna Tuneu

I had the good fortune and the honor of doing my training in dermatology under the guidance and direction of Dr. Moragas and of being a member of his team for more than 10 years in the dermatology department of the Hospital Santa Creu i Sant Pau. Those of us who had the privilege of having Professor Moragas as a teacher and department head will always remember him for his great

ability to stimulate us, for his curiosity about and interest in science, and for his generosity in sharing not only his knowledge of science but also of practical aspects of dealing with patients with both simple and complex diseases. Always approachable, but at the same time demanding and rigorous, he communicated his passion for tested advances in our specialty and created a real school of dermatology that we are all proud of. I will always be grateful to him for his teachings and wise advice, for the way he facilitated our growth, both personal and professional, and especially for what he was — brilliant, generous, dynamic, and an excellent person.

Ramon M. Pujol

I have so many fond and heartwarming memories of the 5 years (1988-1992) that I was fortunate enough to share with a great team led and directed by Dr. Moragas at Sant Pau! I hope these lines will serve to express my enormous gratitude for the way Dr. Moragas transmitted his passion for dermatology within the larger context of medicine in general and infected us with his tireless curiosity about the dizzying pace of advances in science. His ability to make the complicated seem easy and to share his knowledge generously were key in awakening my vocation for teaching.

It was also a real privilege to have enjoyed his dynamism and enthusiasm beyond the professional sphere. Rest in peace.

Vicente García Patos

Today we hope that from above you will realize that we are, have been, and always will be immensely grateful for how you valued us and taught us. We’ll never forget those Wednesday sessions, when you called us up to the board and began asking us questions. True, we were uncomfortable at first, but we eventually realized that all you wanted to do was help us develop so that we would become good dermatologists and the best versions of ourselves. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for teaching us so much on both the professional and personal levels. Thank you too for welcoming us into the department, where we spent so much of our lives. Although you are no longer with us in body, we will always have the legacy of your teaching and of your respect and love for dermatology. And we’ll always remember your peculiar way of smiling, with that twist of your mouth.

Thank you for so much. Fly high, Doctor.

With great affection and esteem from all of us who have had the good fortune to have had you near.

Carme Ventura

I had Dr. Moragas as a teacher during my fifth year of medical studies at Hospital de Sant Pau. Even then, he let me come to the dermatology department he headed when I had no morning classes. I was later able to do my specialty training there. That was in 1977. I remember those times fondly and am very grateful to Dr. Moragas for the training he gave me and for all his personal and professional help.

Juan Antonio Smandia

I can still remember the first time I saw Dr. Moragas. I was a sixth-year medical student, and he was being interviewed by Julia Otero on a television program. He struck me then as brilliant, a person of great intelligence and elegant demeanor. The following year, in 1987, I chose to specialize in dermatology at Hospital de Sant Pau and confirmed my first impression. Unforgettable moments from one of the best times of my life.

Thank you, Dr. Moragas, for your wisdom and for sharing your love and passion for dermatology, one of the great pillars of my life.

Mercè Planagumà

The Chief!!! It is thanks to department chief Dr. Moragas that I have become the dermatologist I am today. He taught me to observe, look beyond just the skin, simplify, and order my thoughts so that I could come up with the most amazing diagnoses — and to appreciate dermatology despite its rigor and complexity. I have many memories, but one in particular — I smile as I fondly recall the moments when the telephone would ring some mornings in the office where we saw patients. On the other end you'd hear him say, "Doctors, put down those pens, I'm waiting, we're going for coffee," and all the way down to the hospital cafeteria we'd talk and talk. Those breaks for me were wonderful. Thank you, Chief.

Mercedes Pérez

I remember very clearly my first meeting with Dr. Moragas on the first day of my residency. He sat reading the *New England* (which he got every week), and I can still see him with his somewhat crooked smile, saying, "You're going to begin dermatology with a wardrobe with only a few empty drawers and shelves. It's up to you to fill them with knowledge, and you'll have the chance to do that in this department. ... And don't neglect internal medicine." For me, Dr. Moragas was my great maestro. He conveyed to us his passion for studying in depth and the need to heal patients. I catch myself every day explaining diseases to patients the way he explained them, using the same similes he used while taking out the little notebook where he'd carefully noted down updates at each medical conference.

It is no exaggeration to say that a school was formed around him. It was a pleasure to see how he always found a topic of conversation with his patients that went beyond medicine, and that also helped them to heal. Dr. Moragas was generous with the time he dedicated to his residents, stopping work at mid-morning to have coffee with us, asking us about our lives and ambitions. I will be eternally grateful and indebted to him because he profoundly influenced my professional career.

Eulalia Baselga

I did my 4 years of residency in dermatology at the Hospital Sant Pau in Barcelona, at a time when it was still located in those beautiful modernist buildings. I chose that program because I was aware of its prestige, and I was sure I'd learn everything I'd need to develop professionally. As soon as I met Dr. Moragas, who would head the department during my 4 years of training, he

impressed me as a person — he was a true gentleman. Later, his intelligence, capacity for work, and tireless search for new knowledge continued to impress me. At that time, the internet was just getting started, and he was always telling his residents about how wonderful this new tool was. But apart from being a great professional, Dr. Moragas always tried to stay close by us. Not a day went by that he didn't come and bring us together to have a mid-morning coffee. It was an honor for me to know him and spend some of the most important years of my life with him.

Julia Miralles

When it came time to choose where to do my residency, one of my professors, Dr. Carlos Ferrándiz said, "You should go to Sant Pau and take advantage of Dr. Moragas' last years and stick like glue to Dr. Lluís Puig and Dr. Ramón Pujol." At Sant Pau, from Dr. Moragas, with whom I had the pleasure to work in his private practice for nearly 30 years, I learned the science and the art of treating patients. Like him, I still see my patients with no desk between us, with my microscope always at hand, using the same explanations, and treating them with compresses dampened with water and vinegar. I'm not so bold with Nivea cream!

He was my mentor, and I'll always be grateful to him. Rest in peace, Doctor.

Marta Alegre

Dr. Moragas' great moment came during clinical presentations, when we discussed real patients. The dimly-lit subterranean meeting room down off one of the tunnels of the old Sant Pau became a torture chamber for the residents. There, like gladiators, they were either raised up to the Olympus of dermatological symptomatology or thrown down to the lions. That Caesar was relentless with his questions, demanding with his differential diagnoses, scathing with his assistants, and affectionate with his residents. He always had the last word, and it was always the wisest.

Jorge Romani

Professor Moragas was the head of the department during my years of residency. His influence on my professional life was considerable, as he instilled in me his love for dermatology, or rather for the profession of dermatologist, which I practice with great pride and satisfaction.

I remember his brilliant interventions in clinical discussion sessions and the generosity with which he shared the precious pearls of therapeutic wisdom he had learned at the Mayo Clinic.

It fascinated me that even when near retirement, he still had an enormous interest in new technologies and basic science, and that for more than 20 years, whenever I called to wish him a Merry Christmas, the first thing he asked was whether I still kept up with the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*.

I remember with much gratitude, and some embarrassment, how he disinterestedly gave me the excellent

references that allowed me to make a career for myself in my native Palma.

Cristina Nadal

Wherever he is, the first piece of advice Dr. Moragas (as many of us would still call him) will give anyone will be to read the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*. He'll then ask how they're doing on filling their English or medicine "drawers," saying that they needed to add a little bit to each every day.

I remember those midday sessions with former residents, some of whom had traveled as long as an hour to be there. I remember our office visits with complicated patients before the sessions, but what impressed me the most was the great atmosphere of scientific curiosity (sometimes leading to real disputes) that reigned in the department.

Thank you for everything, Dr. Moragas, and for having trained that great family of dermatologists, all of them disciples of yours at Sant Pau.

Vicenç Rocamora

Appendix 1

Agustin Alomar, Maria Barnadas, Montse Pérez, Lluís Puig, Ramon M. Pujol, Vicente García Patos, Eulalia Baselga, Julia Miralles, Jorge Romani, Cristina Nadal, Vicenç Rocamora, Rosa Taberner, Neus Salvatella, J.M. Garcia Marques, Anna Ravella, Anna Tuneu, J. Smandia, Eugenia Perez, Mercè Planagumà, Dolors Sitjas, Enric Llistosella, Carme Ventura, Mercedes Perez, Catalina Marques, Felipe Aspiolea, Isabel Vilatella, Assumpta Corbella, Javier Noguera.

M. Alegre Fernández¹

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¹ Those associated with the school of practice that formed around Dr. Moragas at the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau are listed in [Appendix 1](#).