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IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Benedicto Hernández Moro (1933–2011)[☆]

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Benedicto Hernández Moro died on June 27, 2011, the day of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the patroness of the Spanish Army's medical corps.

He died as he had lived, in the way he saw most fitting: at home, in bed, accompanied by his beloved wife, Catiana—without a fuss.

Benedicto was born in a small town in Salamanca and attended high school in Ciudad Rodrigo before going on to read medicine in Salamanca. He was selected for the army medical corps following success in the competitive recruitment exams and he specialized in dermatology in the Hospital Clínico de San Carlos in Madrid, where he went on to serve as the right-hand man of Professor José Orbaneja for many years. With his great wisdom as a physician and as a man, he gained the confidence of his strong-minded superior and earned the friendship of a key group of dermatologists to whom we owe the excellence and high standards of dermatology in Spain today: Luis Iglesias, Antonio Zambrano, Amaro García, Luis Conde-Salazar, Francisco Sánchez de Paz, Evaristo Sánchez Yús, Antonio Castro, José Luis Sánchez Lozano. Together with these colleagues, he organized case study meetings and clinical sessions involving patients at a time when the Hospital Clínico de San Carlos Dermatology Service had only thirty beds for men and a similar number for women. So many Spanish dermatologists passed through

those wards and drank from the unique fount of the clinical wisdom of Benedicto and his colleagues.

From 1982 to 1985, Benedicto was the executive editor of *Actas Dermosifiliográficas* when Professor Antonio García Pérez was the editor.

In time, Benedicto moved on to become head of the dermatology department at the Hospital Gómez Ulla and full professor at the Hospital de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. He gained accreditation for the teaching of dermatology as a specialty in Gómez Ulla, and a first class training was received by every colleague who passed through his department. He was a natural leader and—apparently oblivious to work schedules, holidays, and shifts—he simply encouraged us to resolve matters as soon as they arose and to keep the service covered. His manner with the patients he treated was just as natural, showing an interest in their lives and taking care in the delivery of news, both good and bad.

His in-depth knowledge of the specialty and his sharp clinical eye earned him the renown and medical reputation he deserved. This afforded him great social and professional recognition. Regardless of these achievements, however, he was always accessible to every patient, carefully choosing the best words for each one.

His great gift for teaching and his public speaking skills, honed by the time spent with Professor Orbaneja—from whom he had learned most of the syllabus off by heart—helped his students to grasp with ease the complexities of skin disease. He knew how to teach us the importance of every sign and symptom, leading us step by step to a final diagnosis while making use of all the new techniques made available by the advances of modern science.

The highlights of his career included his treatment of more than thirty Iranian patients during the Iran–Iraq war. In 1986 and 1987, a group of men, women, and children with extensive burns caused by mustard gas were flown out of the war zone for treatment at the Hospital Gómez Ulla. Benedicto rose to the challenge, organizing a multidisciplinary team (ear, nose and throat, ophthalmology, digestive health, toxicology, and plastic surgery) to treat them. The excellent outcomes achieved for these patients earned him the personal thanks of the President of the United Nations and a heartfelt celebration in his honor at the Iranian Embassy in

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Madrid. The reports of this work published in leading journals in association with his most promising student, Luis Requena, attest to its quality.^{1,2}

It is only fair to say that his work defined a turning point in dermatology in the Spanish army corps. National meetings of army dermatologists were always graced with his support and presence, and every delegate at the xxv meeting in Cartagena in 2010 was saddened by his enforced absence due to illness.

But, of all the memories he left behind, the best must surely be reflected in the comment repeated by many of his patients on hearing of his demise, "He was a great doctor. He did not treat me as a patient, but as a person."

References

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