



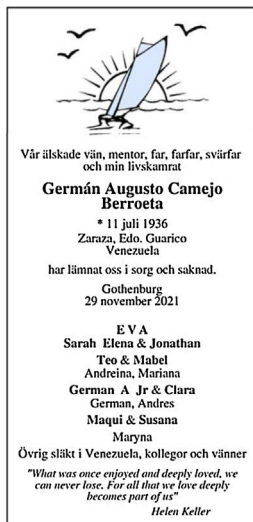
CLÍNICA E INVESTIGACIÓN EN ARTERIOSCLEROSIS

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IN MEMORIAM

Germán Camejo (1936–2021)☆



Germán Camejo died of cancer in the early morning of last 29 November, in his sleep and at peace, according to his widow, Eva, when she told me this morning. Many members of the Spanish Arteriosclerosis Society (SEA) are sad to have lost a great friend and, at an international level, an excellent researcher into the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis and lipid metabolism has gone.

After he was awarded his degree in 1962 in the Science Faculty of the *Universidad Central*, Venezuela, with a thesis on "The structure and properties of Phaseolotoxin A", he applied for a visa to study for his doctoral thesis in the United States, and this was refused by the consulate of that country. Germán was a lively young man (and he remained so until the last) and they showed him photographs of him

stoning the car of Vice President Richard Nixon during his visit to Caracas. I remember those photos because I had seen them published in *Life* magazine at the time, without imagining that one day I would know the young stone thrower. He had to wait until President Kennedy's Democrat government to repeat his visa application, and when the new consul asked him why he had thrown stones at Nixon's car, he answered: "Because he was a Republican, and I'm a Democrat". With the visa in his pocket, he travelled to the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where he stayed for three years and obtained his PhD with a thesis on "The structure of rat plasma lipoproteins: interaction of apolipoproteins with lipid surface monolayers", directed by Maurice M. Rapport. There can be no doubt that this was the start of his first line of research on the initial factor in atherosclerosis, the retention of ApoB carrier lipoproteins by the proteoglycans of the arterial wall.

He returned to Caracas and joined the Venezuelan Scientific Research Institute (IVIC), which had been founded

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by Augusto Pi Sunyer, exiled in Venezuela after the Spanish Civil War and who influenced the scientific education of several generations of Venezuelan researchers so brilliantly.

When I first met Germán, during my first visit to Venezuela in July 1985, he was the deputy director of the IVIC and, over a week, we took part in several round tables in Clínicas Hospital and a television programme, where we spoke in favour of olive oil. In the IVIC he continued to research the subject of his PhD, broadening his approach and publishing half a dozen works. He told me that once he felt sure of his data, he shut himself away in a hotel on Isla Margarita to write his seminal work on ApoB retention by the proteoglycans and the role of this in the development of atherosclerosis. This work was published in 1982 in *Advances in Lipid Research* (Camejo G. "The interaction of lipids and lipoproteins with the intercellular matrix of arterial tissue: its possible role in atherogenesis". *Adv Lipid Res.* 1982;19:1–53). A little more 50 pages long, this paper had great international impact and led to a congratulatory letter from Rodolfo Paoletti. During the week I stayed in Caracas we commenced a friendship and scientific collaboration which lasted up to now.

In 1986 Germán and his wife, Eva Hurt-Camejo, received an invitation to spend a sabbatical year in the Wallenberg Laboratory of Gothenburg University Hospital (Sweden). That sabbatical year lasted for 35 years more, and he was named Clinical Biochemistry Research Fellow and Professor of the University. He subsequently joined AstraZeneca as the Head of the Biochemistry Department, while continuing to collaborate with Wallenberg Laboratory until he retired. In recent years he was named Associate Research Fellow in the Clinical Chemistry Department of the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm.

His research into the development of atherosclerosis covers numerous works which characterise the proteoglycan components with the greatest affinity for ApoB lipoproteins, identifying the arginine- and lysine-rich sequences of apoprotein B-100 which bring about interaction with

the arterial proteoglycans. This established that atherosclerotic lesions develop because of the tissue response to the deposition of lipoproteins with ApoB in the arterial intima, showing that the high affinity of LDL for arterial proteoglycans was associated with increased cardiovascular risk. He also showed that the free fatty acids, hypoxia or certain drugs modulate the retention of lipoproteins in the arterial wall.

As well as this line of research, his time in AstraZeneca led him to become interested in the development and characterisation of the PPAR modulators (tesaglitazar and pemafibrate) together with insulin resistance. I was invited by AstraZeneca to take part there in a seminar on this subject, and I learnt a lot from the questions and constructive advice of Germán, who was always ready to generously share his knowledge. His work with the Karolinska centred on the protective role of brown bear lipoproteins on the arterial wall. Our tireless friend loved to trek in the Swedish forests, and he was interested in the brown bears there.

I invited him to Valencia in 1986, where he gave two lectures, introducing him to the world of atherosclerosis in Spain and, from then on, he proved to be a magnificent and generous collaborator. As well as our group, he also entered into a fruitful collaboration with the group of Luis Masana in Reus, and he helped to create the SEA in Valencia in 1987, taking part in many of our Society's congresses.

As well as being a highly cultured and extraordinarily intelligent man, Germán was also high spirited, friendly and great fun, as he knew how to enjoy life to the full. He was a good dancer and a great cook, proud of knowing how to prepare a hundred types of paella, and it was a pleasure to breakfast in his home on a plate of Andean scrambled eggs that he had cooked.

Germán leaves Eva, his wife, and his daughter Sarah Elena, as well as his sons Teobaldo, Germán Jr. and Maqui, from his first marriage. It is with great sadness that the SEA wished to pay this well-deserved homage to the memory of a great friend and excellent researcher.

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