



## OBITUARY

### José Guimón, Emeritus Professor, 1943–2016 Member of the Advisory Board, European Journal of Psychiatry



Source: El Correo/Bernardo Corral

It is with regret that I have to write the Obituary of Professor José Guimón (J. Guimón-Ugartechea), Emeritus Professor in the Basque Country University in Spain. He died in Bilbao, in December 2016, following severe complications of a brief medical illness. He was a man of exceptional academic achievements, and for me he also was a gentleman, a professional who was able to confront, in a diplomatic way but courageously some negative circumstances in the complex world of the Spanish University system.

Professor Guimón was born in Bilbao, in 1943. He was the son of Julián Guimón, a urologist who suffered the vicissitudes of the Civil War, but managed after that to found the *Clinica Guimón* in Bilbao, upbringing seven children, in the words of José's son 'different but attached to each other, cosmopolitan but loving their land, committed but tolerant'. José attempted to dedicate his last energies to collect the works of his father, although the task was left unfinished.

Prof. Guimón initiated his M.D. degree studies in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Zaragoza, and continued and eventually got his degree in the University of Barcelona (1966). He also completed in this University his Doctoral Thesis and Ph.D. degree, awarded *summa cum laude*, and then his specialization in Psychiatry and Neurology (1970). He trained in Neurology with the prestigious neurologist Barraquer-Bordás. However, in difficult times to get the best

possible training in medicine in Spain, since the National Residency Program was non-existent, he also trained in psychiatry in the Geneva University and Bell-Air Clinic with the influential Basque Professor Julián Ajuriaguerra, considered to be his mentor, and the one whose open-mindedness and anti-dogmatic positions profoundly influenced him. Moreover, Prof. Guimón also departed to the New York University, where he completed his training in Psychiatry with Prof. Arnold J Friedoff and Prof. Murray Alpert, initiating some research in schizophrenia that eventually could be continued by biological studies in the Zamudio Hospital, in Bilbao. In his American experience, his work was convincing enough to be appointed for the position of Adjunct Clinical Professor in the New York University.

Prof. Guimón was appointed Associate Professor of Medical Psychology, Department of Psychiatry in the recently founded University of the Basque Country (1975–1979), and then Professor and Chairman of Psychiatry and Director of the Psychiatry Section, Department of Neurosciences, until 1993. He is credited with the introduction of Group Psychotherapy in the Basque Country and this was fundamental for the development of these techniques in the public service in Spain. In this task, to train psychiatrists and psychologists of his region in the modern techniques, he had crucial support and the invaluable help of Professor L. Yllá, whom was attracted from Madrid and eventually was supported to hold a new Chair in Bilbao.

Following a long and competitive process, Prof. Guimón was appointed Chairman of Psychiatry in the Faculty of Medicine in Geneva (1993–2003) and Director of the University Department of Psychiatry (1994–2003). After that, he was appointed *Professeur Honoraire* in Geneva, and came back to Bilbao to be the Coordinator of Psychiatry in the Department of Neurosciences of the Basque Country University. Until his retirement (2014), has been Emeritus Professor in this last University.

In the clinical arena, he developed the Psychiatry Service in the Hospital Civil de Basurto, in his city, and was Chief Psychiatrist (1973–1993). It was not an easy task, since he had

to start from the scratch and, with his team, had to fight with considerable energy and determination against the position of non-psychiatrist medical colleagues, frequently opposed at the time to the organization of psychiatric services in a general hospital. It was the first general hospital with psychiatric beds in the Basque Country, and he is also credited for developing, probably, the first psychiatric Day Hospital in Spain. Moreover, he has explained the state of psychiatric services in his region when he started his clinical career ... in the 70s, we only had four or five psychiatrists; the clinical psychologists were non-existent, and the nursing staff was competent, but had no specialized training'. Eventually, he was able to develop a full, well staffed Service. In addition, he had important links with prestigious, European schools of psychotherapy, and introduced this as an integral part of the psychiatric treatment. In his trajectory he too was Chief of the Psychiatry Service and Director of the Psychiatric Hospital in Zamudio (Vizcaya) (1980–82). Similarly, his position in the Geneva University included clinical responsibilities, being Chief, Psychiatry Service (1993–2003), and Director of Mental Health Care in the Canton of Geneva (1994–2002). Following his retirement, he organized in Bilbao and Vizcaya the AMSA Company, and has dedicated his efforts to provide psychiatric and psychological care.

Among his administrative positions, he was appointed for the Commission for the Plan of Psychiatric Reform in Spain (1983–1988), and a similar, previous position in Euzkadi (1979–83). He also was President of the National Commission for training in Psychiatry, Spanish Health Ministry (1985–89); Member of the Expert Committee, World Health Organization, WHO (1995–2008); and Director of the WHO Collaborating Center for research and training in psychiatry (1996–2003). Prof. Guimón has received numerous awards and distinctions. He was full member of some thirty different scientific associations, among them the *Real Academia de Medicina de España, Distrito Vasco*; *Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País*; *International Psychoanalytic Association*; and *Jakiunde*.

He was considered to be an open minded, eclectic psychiatrist, and was able to combine his early knowledge in neurology and organic psychiatry, including dementias; his experience, including research experience in schizophrenia; and his capability in psychodynamic psychiatry and group therapy. He is also credited for his strong position against the stigma in patients with psychiatric conditions and in favor of a medical treatment similar to the patients with physical diseases. He has left a legacy of about 300 scientific productions, with a considerable proportion of Science Citation Index articles published in some of the most prestigious international journals, and close to 50 books in different languages.

Some titles of his books reflect the broad scope of his interests and expertise: 'The body in psychotherapy', 1997; 'La profesión de psychiatre. Évolution et devenir', 1998; 'The Image of madness. The public facing mental illness and psychiatric treatment' (edited with W. Fischer and N. Sartorius, 1999); 'Challenges of psychoanalysis in the 21st century. Psychoanalysis, health and psychosexuality in the era of virtual reality' (edited with S. Zac de Filc, 2001); 'Inequity and madness. Psychosocial and human rights issues', 2001; 'Manage or perish? The challenges of managed mental health care in Europe' (edited with N. Sartorius, 1999); 'Introduction aux thérapies de groupe', 2001; 'Relational mental health: beyond evidence-based psychosocial interventions', 2004; or the biography of his mentor, 'Vie et oeuvre de Julián de Ajuriaguerra' (edited with JM Aguirre).

José Guimón was quite a learned person, but also very affective, and his passion for the art and the literature was well known. A man who 'could feel deeply moved when reading Wilde's poetry, watching a Pollock's picture or a rainy landscape', as expressed by his son. In relation to this, he has left quite visible marks, including some books: 'Psicoanálisis y literatura', 1993; 'Art et psychiatrie', 2004; 'Art and madness', 2006; or, the analysis he completed of his admired writer and novelist, Pio Baroja ('Baroja en el diván. Aproximación psicoanalítica a su vida y a su obra', 2006).

Of great size, a good-looking person, José inspired trust and confidence, but also authority. Close colleagues describe him as a man with excellent work capacity, a determined person able to tackle outstanding problems quickly and could also be a funny, amusing man, a 'great professional and even better colleague... the best possible boss' ... as has been said by Prof. M. Gutiérrez, one of his younger colleagues and President of the Spanish Psychiatric Association until recently.

Professor Guimón leaves an indelible mark in the Basque psychiatry, his colleagues say. I could assure he also was a generous person, whose gentlemanliness also leaves an indelible mark in the Spanish psychiatry. His wife, Elisabeth, two sons and a daughter and four grandchildren survive him. Both his work and his spirit will remain.

A. Lobo

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