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IN MEMORIAM

Juan Rodés Teixidor. Referent of hepatology and biomedical research[☆]

Juan Rodés Teixidor. Referente de la hepatología y de la investigación biomédica



Dr Juan Rodés Teixidor, founder of the Hepatology Unit at Hospital Clínic in Barcelona and one of the doctors who has contributed the most to modernising medicine and clinical research in Spain, passed away on 10 January 2017 in Barcelona at the age of 78 years.

Juan Rodés graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Barcelona in 1962. After his initial training in Internal Medicine at the Hospital Clínic, he completed his training with a fellowship at the Hepatology Department of the Hôpital Saint-Antoine in Paris under the direction of Professor Jacques Caroli, which probably marked his future. In

1968 he founded the Hepatology Unit of the Hospital Clínic, which within a few years became one of the most important units in Europe and an international benchmark. Thanks to his leadership skills and his generosity, he was able to surround himself with a group of outstanding professionals who have remained at the unit over the years, along with the successive integration of new doctors as the unit grew. The hepatology unit was organised into several clinical and research lines, with each of its members responsible for one of them, including cirrhosis complications, portal hypertension, viral hepatitis, liver cancer, liver transplant, cholestasis and alcohol-related liver diseases.

Dr Rodés always had a clear vision that the clinic and research were two complementary activities, and that a good doctor should combine both activities. For this reason, he instilled in all the members of the unit the importance of research, of writing a doctoral thesis and of completing a postdoctoral placement at renowned centres. He also insisted on the need to publish the research in both conference communications as well as scientific journals. He was especially meticulous in taking care of the formal aspects of the communications and articles.

Dr Rodés' importance in transforming the Hospital Clínic has been immeasurable, both in converting the former professorships into departments and later creating institutes, as well as in his time as medical director and director general, a role in which he successfully overcame a challenging period for the hospital. To integrate clinical and translational research, he first created and directed the Fundació Clínic per a la Recerca Biomèdica [Clinical Foundation for Biomedical Research] and later the Instituto de Investigaciones Biomédicas August Pi i Sunyer [August Pi i Sunyer Biomedical Research Institute] (IDIBAPS). The IDIBAPS was

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the model that inspired the Institute of Health Carlos III to create the Health Research Institutes, organised around Spain's largest hospitals. Dr Rodés' other initiatives in the Hospital Clínic were creating the end-of-residency awards and the sabbatical years from which a large part of the hospital's workforce has benefited over the last 30 years.

The hepatology unit has served as an example for the development of the specialty in Spain. In this regard, Dr Rodés contributed to creating the Asociación Española para el Estudio del Hígado [Spanish Association for the Study of the Liver] (AEEH) of which he was president. He also founded and was the first director of the *Revista Gastroenterología y Hepatología* [Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology]. The quality and the high number of delegates (around 800) at the latest AEEH congresses are testament to the hepatology boom in Spain. Dr Rodés' contribution to the development of hepatology internationally was also extremely noteworthy, having been a member of the governing board of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), editor of the *Journal of Hepatology*, president of the International Association for the Study of the Liver (IASL) and a prominent member of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD), being one of the few non-American doctors who has received the highest honour from that society.

Another of Juan Rodés' notable traits was his teaching. He obtained the Professorship of Internal Medicine from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Barcelona in 1985 and promoted numerous initiatives from the hepatology unit for pre- and post-doctoral training, including Courses for Students, Courses for Post-graduates, the Iberoamerican Courses in Hepatology, the Master's in Liver Disease Research and the International Meeting on Therapy in Liver Diseases, which is now in its twelfth year. Over these years, the Hepatology Unit has welcomed dozens of doctors from Europe and Latin America to complete their clinical and research training. Particularly noteworthy are the close relationships established between Juan Rodés and the rest of the units doctors with the different Hepatology Societies from Latin America.

Juan Rodés' influence on the development of biomedical research in Spain has gone beyond the field of hepatology, as shown by his participation on numerous consulting boards of public and private research bodies. He was also the president of the Ministry of Health's advisory board, an unpaid

post that he held for 15 years under governments of different political parties. His commitment was unwavering, even after the onset of his illness, to coordinate the work of the commission to draft the National Plan for Hepatitis C. This plan, which was not easy to develop, was a success and is a model for other countries to follow.

Juan Rodés never liked the limelight nor his presence in the media. Despite this, over the course of his professional career he received many accolades, including the Creu de Sant Jordi [Saint Georges Cross], the Medalla de Oro [Gold Medal] of the Government of Catalonia, the Gran Cruz of the Orden Civil de Sanidad [Civil Order of Health Grand Cross], the Josep Trueta and Narcís Monturiol medals and the National Prize for Research in Medicine. Nevertheless, Juan Rodés' greatest pride was the recognition of his work by his collaborators and the national and international hepatology community. One way of perpetuating his memory are the Juan Rodés scholarships from the AEEH, earmarked for completing the training of young hepatologists, and the Juan Rodés contracts from the Institute of Health Carlos III, to support the development of doctors' research careers.

Lastly, I want to express my admiration and gratitude to Juan Rodés. I knew him when I was a boarding student in 1969 when he started the adventure of the hepatology unit and since then his influence on the development of my professional career has been decisive. It is impossible to list all my memories and experiences of these nearly 50 years, but I want to highlight his recommendation to start a new line of research in the unit dedicated to the study of alcohol-related liver disease, his generosity, his accessibility and his interest in work, people and family. He continued demonstrating this interest until the last months of his illness. I want to express my deepest condolences to his wife Paula and his daughters Idoia and Claudia, and to tell them that I will miss his friendship and his advice. I am certain that these sentiments are shared by all the members of the Hepatology Unit at the Hospital Clínic of Barcelona.

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