



IN MEMORIAM

In memory of Dr. Fernando Fernández-Bañares (1958–2023)

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Internationally renowned gastroenterologist Dr. Fernando Fernández-Bañares passed away on June 13, 2023 at the age of 64, after nine months battling pancreatic cancer.

Fernando Fernández-Bañares (Fig. 1) was born in Barcelona on September 24, 1958. Following in the footsteps of his father Fernando Fernández-Nogués, an internist doctor, Fernando graduated in Medicine at the University of Barcelona in 1982. He then did his training in Digestive



Figure 1 Fernando Fernández-Bañares doing one of the things he knew best: working as a clinician and researcher.

Medicine at Bellvitge University Hospital between 1983 and 1987. During his residency he met a fellow physician, Dr. Maria Esteve, with whom he would share a long professional career. In 1987, he finished a postgraduate degree in Biostatistics and in 1991, he completed his doctoral thesis entitled "Acute effects of abdominopelvic irradiation on the orocecal transit time: its relation to clinical symptoms, and bile salt and lactose malabsorption" that was published in the American Journal of Gastroenterology in 1991 (PMID: 1962621) and was supervised by Professor Miguel Ángel Gassull. The following two years he worked at the Hospital of Calella and later logged 11 years as a post-doctoral researcher at the Germans Trias i Pujol University Hospital. Finally, in 1996 he joined the Mútua Terrassa University Hospital where he performed both clinical practice and excellent research until his last days. In 2002, Fernando Fernández-Bañares and Maria Esteve received two prestigious research grants from "La Marató de TV3" Foundation that would represent the beginning of their own gastroenterology research group. Later, in 2005, Fernando Fernández-Bañares and Maria Esteve, together with David Dalmau, Maribel García-Domingo, Antonio Salas, Javier Garau, and Esteve Cugat, received an infrastructure grant from the Instituto de Salud Carlos III (IF053703) of the Health Ministry of the Spanish government, which would represent the beginning of a fruitful research laboratory (Fundació per la Docència i Recerca Mútua de Terrassa). Fernando was passionate about medicine, research, and family.

Fernando was devoted to his patients and took great care of them. He was always available to his colleagues to discuss complicated cases; junior staff counted on his advice and wisdom. All the hospital team and colleagues (Figs. 2 and 3) will miss him greatly.

Research and mentoring were also great passions of his. He published more than 160 articles in indexed international



Figure 2 Gastroenterology team of the Mútua Terrassa University Hospital in 2018. From left to right: Jorge Espinós, Eva Tristán, Diana Horta, Xavier Andújar, Montserrat Forné, Lissette Batista, Carme Loras, Albert Martín-Cardona, Beatriz Arau, Maria Esteve, Laura Ruiz-Campos, Meritxell Mariné, Montserrat Aceituno, Agnès Raga, Yamile Zabana, and Fernando Fernández-Bañares.



Figure 3 Espai Mireia (Collserola), May 5, 2023, day of the farewell gathering. From left to right: Xavier Andújar, Victòria Marquina, Isabel Salvador, Raimon Rifà, Pablo Ruiz, Montserrat Aceituno, Maria Esteve, Fernando Fernández-Bañares, Yamile Zabana, Carme Loras, Ingrid Fajardo, Beatriz Arau, Albert Martín-Cardona, and Emma Sudrià.

journals, accumulating 11,258 citations, with an *H* index of 60. His work can be consulted at the following link: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1489-504X>. Among his output, the article entitled “Randomized clinical trial of *Plantago ovata* seeds (dietary fiber) as compared with mesalamine in maintaining remission in ulcerative colitis”, published in 1999 in *The American Journal of Gastroenterology*, has more than 487 citations.¹ Among the topics he was most passionate about are chronic diarrhea,² bile salt malabsorption,³ intestinal malabsorption and nutrition,⁴ microscopic colitis,⁵ inflammatory bowel disease,⁶ and celiac disease.⁷ Fernando became a world-renowned expert for his work on celiac disease and microscopic colitis. In 1999, he described the first cohort of patients with microscopic colitis in the population of Terrassa (Spain)⁸ and thanks to him we have published data on the evolution of the prevalence of the disease over three decades in our country. In recent years, he evaluated the usefulness of intestinal flow cytometry in the diagnosis of celiac disease, especially in difficult cases.⁹ Fernando was always recognized for rigorous, meticulous, and high-quality research. His main priority was helping clinicians in their decisions and improving the quality of life of their patients, as he was not looking for personal prestige, instead he was prone to establish great collaboration networks. Mentoring students was one of Fernando’s great qualities^{10,11}; he loved to teach his students and disciples. He was professor in the Master’s of Digestive System program of the Catalan Society of Digestology (<https://www.scdigestologia.org/?p=page/html/master.uoc>) and collaborated in multiple teaching projects both nationally and internationally. During his career he directed three doctoral theses (Dr. Josep Mañé, Dr. Helena Monzón, Dr. Anna Carrasco) and multiple master’s theses; several more were left unfinished by his death. He had a very special sense of humor and an amazing ability to focus. Moreover, he always made great contributions and corrections and was willing to share his wise thoughts. The horrible disease that he was diagnosed within September 2022 did not prevent him from continuing to help and teach his colleagues and collaborators; he continued with his research, correcting articles, reviewing manuscripts, and even during chemotherapy sessions he edited and corrected manuscripts and moved forward with leading projects. He worked hard until his last days of life and was concerned about letting his pupils unattended. Everyone he worked with had great admiration of him and appreciation for his particular teaching style. Fernando was an important member of several medical societies, including the Catalan Society of Gastroenterology, Spanish Association of Gastroenterology (AEG), Spanish Celiac Disease Society (SEEC), Spanish Working Group on Crohn’s Disease and Ulcerative Colitis (GETECCU), and European Microscopic Colitis Group (EMCG).

On a personal level, Fernando was passionate about his family and friends. In 1987, he married Carmen Sunico and they subsequently adopted and raised four children. He was a devoted Catholic who lived surrounded by his family and friends in the town of Sant Just Desvern (Barcelona). He enjoyed spending his summers in the town of Castellterçol.

Fernando has left a giant void in the family of European gastroenterologists. He will forever be remembered for his inspiring contributions to science, and for his tenacity, wit,

and sense of humor. His contributions to the fields of coeliac disease and microscopic colitis are longstanding and far-reaching. We will all miss his insightful comments at meetings, astute guidance about career issues, and his suggestions about navigating modern-day science, and especially his profound knowledge of the physiopathology of digestive diseases. But as Fernando would say, let’s get to work!

Authors’ contributions

AMC and AC were involved in the conception and design of the manuscript. ME is the guarantor of the paper and coordinated the research group. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript, including the authorship list.

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Conflict of interest

All authors report no conflicts of interest in relation to the subject of this article.

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