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### IN MEMORIAM

## José M. Cañadell Carafí (Barcelona 1923–Pamplona 2014)☆



I never thought that I would have to write the obituary of a person so dear to me, and even less that I would be bidding him farewell as President of SECOT. I recall the deep emotion I felt when I received the medal of SECOT as I thought that Dr. Cañadell's name was there. I collected the award knowing that I was following in the footsteps of the two people who, without a doubt, have left the greatest impression on my professional life; Francisco Vaquero and José Cañadell.

Dr. Cañadell's career is well-known and easy to trace from its start at Sagrado Corazón Hospital, with Dr. Santos Palazzi, and at Cruz Roja Hospital, in Barcelona. In 1996, he defended his thesis, "Verification of the local factors affecting growth cartilage activity", a line of research which he continued to develop and which, with his characteristic clinical view, would become the keynote address of SECOT at the Congress of Torremolinos in 1976.

In 1968, he became Head of the recently created Department of Traumatology and Orthopedic Surgery at Navarra University. He began as Associate Professor, with exclusive dedication to the School of Medicine and the Clinic, but he had permission to travel to Barcelona on weekends to continue caring for his patients at Balmes Street. A new challenge which involved weekly travel between Barcelona and Pamplona. On Mondays he arrived at Pamplona's old train station very early, before the city had started to wake up. From there, after a quick coffee at the sleepy canteen, he went to the School of Medicine to teach traumatology and orthopedic surgery, and then he saw patients until very late, surgery, more classes, Board meetings, as he was in charge of Navarra University's Clinic for 23 years, and Medicine Faculty meetings, of which he was vice-dean for another 15 years, working alongside professor Eduardo Ortiz de Landázuri. As if this wasn't enough, in Pamplona he was also in charge of the traumatology and orthopedic surgery department and, of course, patients, fostering research and preparing scientific commitments and conferences. What we always referred to as "the boss and his postcards", constantly viewing slides and asking the imaging department for a new transparency of a scan which the technician knew perfectly well since he had already worked on it many times before. Very soon, the first doctoral theses began, the works on scoliosis, the first publications, the SICOT research prize, the first foreign residents, innovative surgical procedures. Those were days of constant activity, because on Thursdays he traveled to Barcelona. And he kept this up for many years.

For Cañadell, his life in Pamplona was, as he himself explained during an interview, "a new experience, with a different philosophy and a particular spirit which offered the possibility of combining assistance, teaching and research, which until then had been a dream for me. Full dedication in one place, with different activities. Work at the Clinic allowed me to develop new techniques, from instrumentation in spinal surgery for scoliosis, to joint prostheses. It also meant teaching basic training courses, with those on osteosynthesis for the treatment of fractures and microsurgery being especially successful. On the other hand, coming to Pamplona opened up new fields within the

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specialty, like musculoskeletal tumor surgery, always seeking the most conservative solution. Today, thanks to advances in chemotherapy, and also radiotherapy to a certain extent, bone tumor surgery is one of the fields which offers most satisfactions in the specialty. We are currently seeing very high survival indices, which were unthinkable a few decades ago. A new bone bank was started, which nowadays has extensive experience with allografts. Another line of work was the study and treatment of growth cartilage pathologies. Lastly, elongation is another technique in which I believe we have offered a good service to the specialty. In this regard, I can tell you that the team spends many hours performing experimental surgery on lambs. I was very pleased when the School allowed us to set up an Experimental Orthopedics laboratory," since, as he explained, "these years in Navarra University have been a marvelous adventure for me, just as I was promised when I first started, over thirty years ago".

He was the type of person who trusted his collaborators and always said that the King of Prussia had been wise to surround himself with good professionals. He based the development and operation of Navarra University's Clinic on the model of the Mayo Clinic, which he knew very well since, as he often repeated, he had undergone open heart surgery there in 1961. Thus, it combined healthcare assistance, exquisite patient care, personal and professional training of all healthcare staff; teaching and research. In this case, research reflected a passion for acquiring new knowledge.

The list of doctors who have passed through his department is extensive. We don't just remember the training and impulse for research we received; many of us consider ourselves his children! Together with Montse, Dr. Cañadell has been welcoming and generous, warm and devoted to others. For a long time, with pride and gratitude, Dr. Cañadell carried in his wallet a photograph of the family of one of

his residents with the inscription: "Rest assured that everything you give to your students is received by each of them, their wives and their children." We could add many similar anecdotes.

His vision of the future and his great capacity for management led him, being the youngest president of SECOT, between 1970 and 1972, to establish the regulations for General Assemblies and create the research awards. He also presided over the Catalan traumatology and orthopedic surgery society and EPOS (European Pediatric Orthopaedic Society), between 1993 and 1995. He was a founding member and supporter of GEER, the Microsurgery society, the Cervical Spine Research Society and EMSOS (European Musculo Skeletal Orthopaedic Society). Toward the end of his outstanding career he received the gold medal of the Red Cross and of Navarra University, and was named honorary member of SECOT and EFORT.

Dr. Cañadell always had questions and he always answered them with great common sense. That is why he has left such a significant mark in different areas of orthopedic surgery, including a technique which carries his name. In the interview mentioned previously, Dr. Cañadell concluded: "it is not correct to believe that one has left a mark, because achievements are the product of everyone's work. My contribution is a grain of sand. It is important to see that life continues once you are gone. That helps you to be humble. But it can also mean that you have managed to gather a good team." The great sorrow of not being able to spend time with him again, of remembering him, is also accompanied by the satisfaction of knowing that he finally reached what he always wanted; to be "with the Good Lord" and with Montse, forever.

F. Forriol

*President of SECOT*

*E-mail address: [fforriol@mac.com](mailto:fforriol@mac.com)*