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IN MEMORIAM

In memoriam, prof María Castellano Arroyo ☆

En memoria de la profesora María Castellano Arroyo

Aurelio Luna Maldonado

Departamento de Ciencias Sociosanitarias, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, Spain

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to write a few lines in memory of Professor María Castellano Arroyo. Behind the figures, dates, and life trajectory is a story, and within each story is a person and a message constructed from words and actions. I will speak from memory to share a reflection where emotions and facts construct a reality that is not entirely objective, but which defines the protagonist of the story.

I first met María Castellano in the 1973–1974 academic year, when she provided me with practical training in medico-legal documents as a final-year medical student. Later, when I joined the Department of Legal Medicine in Granada in 1975 to write my thesis, I was fortunate enough to share time, space, and concerns with her until she was appointed to the Chair of Legal Medicine in Zaragoza. We remained friends until her death this year. She lived her life with enthusiasm and faced adversity with fortitude. As Aristotle said, “Hope is a waking dream”, María always knew how to keep hope alive.

During our stay in Granada, we had the opportunity to publish several works together: Castellano, Rodrigo, Villanueva, and Luna (1976);¹ Luna, Céspedes, Castellano, and Villanueva (1978);² Céspedes, Castellano, Rodrigo, Luna and Villanueva (1979);³ Castellano and Luna (1981);⁴ Luna, Villanueva, Castellano, and Jiménez (1981);⁵ and I would like to mention our most recent publication with Professor Castellano and our mentor: Villanueva Cañadas, Castellano Arroyo, and Luna Maldonado (2018).⁶

Professor Castellano's scientific and professional career is impeccable. I speak in the present tense because memory is always current. She graduated in Medicine and Surgery from

the University of Granada in 1972, obtaining her PhD in Medicine in 1977 with a thesis on the application of biochemical parameters for estimating the age of bone remains under the supervision of our mentor, Professor Villanueva Cañadas. Several papers were published based on this thesis: Villanueva, Girela, and Castellano: Villanueva, Girela, and Castellano (1976);⁷ Castellano, Rodrigo, Villanueva, and Luna (1976);¹ Castellano, Villanueva, and Von Frenckel (1984).⁸ This represented a breakthrough in the methodology to be applied to this problem.

A specialist in legal and forensic medicine, occupational medicine, and clinical analysis, she was an assistant professor in Granada in 1978 and a forensic doctor by competitive examination in the same year. She was a professor in Zaragoza from 1980 to 1996 and was the first female professor of medicine in Spain, in Granada and Alcalá de Henares in 1996. She has been a full member of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Zaragoza since 1986 and of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Granada since 2007. She has been a member of the Royal National Academy of Medicine since 2012. She was a member of the Medical Ethics and Deontology Committees of the medical associations of Zaragoza (1983–1996) and Granada (1997–2010), and of the Central Deontology Committee of the Medical Association from 2010 to 2014.

Her merits and awards include the First Class Cross of San Raimundo de Peñafort, for her collaboration with the Administration of Justice, in 1983; the Police Merit Medal, with white distinction, for her contribution to the training of the Spanish Judicial Police; Honorary Doctorate from the

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E-mail address: aurluna@um.es.

University of Extremadura in 2018; Honorary Doctorate from the University of Jaén in 2021; the Medal of Andalusia in 2020.

She has published over 300 articles in various areas of legal and forensic medicine, and over 50 chapters in specialised books on legal medicine, forensic toxicology, health law, medical ethics and deontology, and occupational medicine and health. She has authored more than 300 papers and delivered presentations at national and international conferences. She has supervised 33 doctoral theses. Her main areas of research are violence in the family environment, forensic psychiatry (assessment of psychological damage and assessment of dangerousness), and health law. Examples of her work include the publication of criteria for assessing professional responsibility, Ferrara, Baccino, Bajanowski, et al. (2013),⁹ and her reflections on the construction of legal medicine, the subject of her inaugural speech at the Royal National Academy of Medicine, Castellano Arroyo (2012).¹⁰

Her commitment to the university and to forensic medicine shaped her career. She never forgot her role as a forensic doctor and was always willing to collaborate effectively and enthusiastically to promote the work of forensic doctors.

Her final role was coordinating the latest edition of the Gisbert Calabuig, Villanueva Cañadas Treatise on Legal Medicine and Toxicology. She dedicated all her effort, hard work, and knowledge to the eighth edition of this project, which has a long history that began with Professor Gisbert and continued with Professor Villanueva Cañadas, who taught both the author of this article and Professor Castellano. Professor Castellano contributed various chapters to the 4th (1991),¹¹ 5th (1998),¹² 6th (2004),¹³ 7th (2019),¹⁴ and 8th (2024)¹⁵ editions.

Behind the numbers and data was a person with great work ethic, tenacity, and commitment to her ideas. She knew how to convey the need to face present challenges with a vision for the future. She believed in what she did, which gave her the conviction to fight until the end. She leaves behind a school in Zaragoza with Professor Martínez Jarreta in her position, and a multitude of professionals who have absorbed her teachings and passed them on with enthusiasm. As Tennyson wrote, "I am a part of all that I have met", María Castellano Arroyo knew how to choose the best from her path, which was not always free of adversity, and how to manage her successes and honours until the end. There, she demonstrated that her deep faith was a reality.

As I said at the beginning, every story is about a person and a message constructed through words and actions. Professor Castellano Arroyo's message is that work is a commitment that improves us, and that loyalty to our ideas prevents us from forgetting the meaning of our journey.

As Antonio Gala said, "I know of no better immortality than to be remembered with affection and respect by those who come after us", María, you have achieved this goal. I will remember you, and we all will, with respect and affection.

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Conflict of interests

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