



IN MEMORIAM

Dr. D. José Manuel Gómez Beltrán (1932-2023)

At the beginning of the summer, Dr. José Manuel Gómez Beltrán, a time-honoured trauma and orthopaedic surgeon, a selfless worker and tenacious fighter in his profession, his specialty, and his life, died in Zaragoza, his town of origin and professional life. Like so many other solid professionals in Spain who opened the minds of the generations who must now carry the weight of Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma, his career and his drive sustain us as an example.

He was born and grew up during difficult years, investing energy and ambition into education and training, as the good son of teachers. After completing his Baccalaureate with Honours at the Polytechnic College of Zaragoza between 1942 and 1949, he obtained the Extraordinary Prize in the State Exam and studied Medicine in Zaragoza with brilliance until 1955, being awarded the Extraordinary Bachelor's Prize.

At this time the teaching of Medicine at the University of Zaragoza was led by Grande Covián, Jiménez González, Lozano Blesa, Palomar, Lorente Sanz, Ramón Vinós, de Azúa, Fairén Gallán, Oliver Rubio, Mateo Tinao and many other outstanding professors. With the M.I.R. still to be developed, he followed the available paths for specialized training as a Pensioned Internal Physician in Clinics of the Faculty of Medicine and then in the new initiative of the Health Insurance Scholars, being a Traumatology Scholar while completing and reading his Thesis Doctorate in 1960 on "Ossification in Experimental Fractures". In years when few colleagues managed to complete their training abroad, he obtained a scholarship from the German Government (DAAD) in the exchange programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and moved from 1960 to 1961 to the Surgical Clinic of the University of Kiel (Federal Germany) where he was part of the team developing bone reconstruction techniques using a heterologous bone bank (the well-known "Kiel Graft"), with Dr. Bauermeister and Prof. Wanke.

Returning to Spain, he joined the Traumatology Service of Dr Pérez Serrano at the "Nuestra Señora de Gracia" Provincial Hospital in Zaragoza, a traditional Zaragoza centre that

already had one of the most active Spanish anatomical amphitheatres in the 17th century. Zaragoza General Hospital was rebuilt after the War of Independence and the destruction of Zaragoza at the hands of the French in 1809, and it provided hospital care during those years when the so-called Health City was being planned and the Clinical Hospital was divided between this Provincial Hospital and clinics located in the former Faculty of Medicine. At the Hospital he had the opportunity to continue his research and founded the OSTIBER Bone Bank, licensed to supply the Kiel graft throughout Spain, selflessly providing bone to all his colleagues who required it in times of scarcity of solutions to bone defects.

In 1964, the first medical specialist in traumatology exams took place for the compulsory health insurance (S.O.E), which led to the awarding of 39 positions throughout Spain in 1966. These were the beginnings of compulsory health insurance prior to the hospital hierarchy, and he obtained one of the 2 places in Zaragoza (the other, awarded to Dr Pelegrín Sola). It is worth noting that the 3 places in Madrid were obtained by Drs Munuera Martínez, Palacios Carvajal and Alonso Carro.

Facing the usual difficulties of developing a university and healthcare career, he was also appointed Assistant Professor of Practical Classes, then later Course Leader, and after national professional exams, Associate Professor of the Chair of Anatomy B (Professor Mr. Luis Jiménez) of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zaragoza. Subsequently and always through exam success, he consolidated his position as Head of the Children's Orthopaedics Section at the Children's Hospital of the then "José Antonio" Health City, then "Miguel Servet" Hospital, and later Head of the Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma Service at the "Nuestra Señora de Gracia" Provincial Hospital, where he ended his professional life in 2002. Academically active, he published in children's orthopaedics, anatomy and embryology, foot, hip, etc. and his involvement in numerous national societies was continuous. To highlight his contribution to SECOT, of which he was a full member since October 10, 1962, as Secretary General he organised the 1968 National Congress in Zaragoza, with Dr. Pérez Serrano as President of the Congress and Dr. Santos Palazzi as President of SECOT. He

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was also particularly active in professional corporate life, as Collegiate Representative of Young Doctors and National Representative in the General Council of Medical Colleges. In 1987, he was elected Full Academician of the Royal Academy of Medicine, Zaragoza district, an institution for which he conducted until the end of his days numerous investigations and conferences on the history of medicine or social, legal and local issues of the Aragonese city and community, including the History of Aragonese Trauma Medicine.

He was a likeable person, always generous in initiative and availability, endowed with a strong critical spirit while still being congenial. He was also an exemplary father of

three children, two of whom are doctors, one of them in the specialty, and one a veterinarian.

Let us not just reflect on the future Dr. Gómez Beltrán adhered to but also that of many colleagues who, in the second half of the 20th century, contributed to launching our specialty in Spain in communities less interconnected than now, through their daily work and tenacity. We lay tribute to him and to so many colleagues from those generations who, loyal to their principles, shaped the growth of the specialty in Spain and provided the essential contribution of Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma to the Spanish Medicine that we currently enjoy.