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Obituary

Prof. José Manuel Sánchez-Ortega



A gentleman from Salamanca

On March 22, a few days after turning 83, Prof. José Manuel Sánchez-Ortega passed away. José Manuel, or Jose (as those of us who were close to him called him), with no tradition of doctors in the family, left his town of La Fuente de San Esteban to study medicine at the University of Salamanca. He returned to practice general medicine in Garcibuey, and later in his hometown, but his passion for surgery (supposedly the town veterinarian had something to do with it) was so great that he applied for a medical resident position with the Surgery Department at the Hospital de Sant Pau. Although he did not have much hope, Jose was accepted, and he was quickly off to an immense, cosmopolitan Barcelona that had nothing to do with the meadow and pastures of Salamanca.

After finishing his residency, José Manuel began his journey through the hospitals of Barcelona. First, as an attending at the Hospital de la Vall d'Hebrón, then at the Hospital de Bellvitge as Department Head, and always following in the footsteps of Dr. Antoni Sitges Creus, who he considered his professor. Finally, he became Department Head at the Parc de Salut Mar hospitals (Hospital de la Esperanza and Hospital del Mar), from

where he retired administratively but never ceased to be an active member of its Surgery Department. Jose's desk has been orphaned, scattered with his last notes for upcoming talks he was preparing. As for his academic career, he was Associate Professor of Surgery and later Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Out of the multiple awards he received, I would highlight the Virgili Prize, presented by the Catalan Society of Surgery and the Award for Professional Excellence of the Barcelona College of Physicians, but José Manuel would surely mention having been chosen *pregonero* (a sort of town crier) during the Corpus Christi Festival and having a street named after him in his hometown.

Although his academic career is undoubtedly relevant, I personally believe that it is the least important. Because, in addition to being a great surgeon, professor and teacher, Jose was a humble leader, an excellent person and a good friend: an example of personal and professional values that modern medicine tends to forget and that we should recover. Until the very end, he demonstrated his warmth, his wisdom and his involvement with colleagues, patients and friends. All of us who have had the privilege of observing these virtues will dearly miss the *gentleman from Salamanca*.

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