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IN MEMORIAM

Samuel Dorantes Mesa (1920-2015)

Dr. José Alberto García Aranda

Dirección General, Hospital Infantil de México Federico Gómez, Mexico City, Mexico

Dr. Samuel Dorantes Mesa was born July 13, 1920 in Xalapa, Veracruz. His parents were Luis Dorantes Martínez, a farmer and merchant, and Laura Mesa de Dorantes, a homemaker.

Dr. Dorantes carried out his early studies through high school in his hometown, always receiving the highest grades. In 1938 he left his *tierruca*, as he called it, in the footsteps of his beloved older brother, *Miguelón*, who exercised great influence over him, to begin his study of medicine at the Military Medical School in Mexico City. His intelligence and enormous dedication led him to obtain first place in his class during 5 of the 6 years of his major field of study. He completed his studies on February 10, 1944. In September 1943 he married Concepción Álvarez Garduño and they had four children: Luis Miguel, Lidia, Laura and Samuel.

At that time, when extended and highly structured post-graduate studies were not usual and medical specialties just initiated, Dr. Dorantes Mesa received an excellent and complete academic preparation.

From 1946-1949 he held the rotating internship and social service in Internal Medicine at the Hospital Central Militar. His specialization was carried out in Hematology at the Instituto Nacional de Enfermedades de la Nutrición with Dr. Luis Sánchez Medal who instilled scientific rigor and reasoning in the study of hematological patients. He later developed these qualities and was often asked to collaborate in the study of patients with difficult diagnoses, even if they were not hematologically oriented.

Dr. Dorantes completed his studies in 1959 with a residency as associate researcher with the group of Dr. Benjamin Alexander in Boston, Massachusetts (U.S.). There he studied physiology and pathophysiology of coagulation.

In 1953, Dr. Federico Gomez invited Dr. Dorantes to work at the Hospital Infantil de México in the newly established Hematology Department. Here he began his professional career, first as an external physician and then as head of the department and full-time researcher. He was the Director of the Department of Hematology for the next 34 years.

Dr. Dorantes was a prolific writer throughout his tenure at the Hospital Infantil de México. In 1970 he published the book *Diagnosis of Hematologic Problems in Pediatrics*, a sold-out and duplicated edition, which served as the basis for the Department of Pediatric Hematology's education programs for more than 10 years. A second edition appeared in 1997. In 1981 Dr. Dorantes was editor of the book *Hemorrhage and Thrombosis* in collaboration with 23 distinguished Latin American hematologists. From 1955 to 1990 Dr. Dorantes published 95 articles in national and international medical journals and 27 book chapters covering pediatric and hematologic themes.

The most significant contributions to the scientific production of Dr. Dorantes Mesa were almost always the product of original ideas and views on the following topics: aplastic anemia, hereditary hemolytic anemia, thrombocytopenic purpura, juvenile osteopetrosis and severely malnourished childhood purpura.

Due to its high morbidity and mortality, aplastic anemia was an area that held the interest of Dr. Dorantes for many years. Finally, Dr. Dorantes suggested that the socioeconomic conditions of poverty, malnutrition and prolonged exposure to certain chemicals such as benzene play a major role in the genesis of the disease. This was a totally new theory at the time.

E-mail: jaranda@himfg.edu.mx.

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Probably the most important contribution to the scientific career of Dr. Dorantes Mesa was the discovery of "García Disease", named for the affected patient. This patient had cyclic thrombocytopenia, which was considered as a new disease entity by the International Registry Center.

For many, the field in which Professor Dorantes obtained his greatest achievements was specifically in teaching. At the Hospital Infantil de México, he was Professor of Hematology of the University Course of Pediatrics from 1955 to 1987 and for 29 years (1958-1987) taught the course of Specialization in Pediatric Hematology to a total of 50 pediatricians or internists from Argentina, Paraguay, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico. Moreover, in 1966 he initiated the course of Laboratory of Hematology, which continued until 1987.

The influence that Dr. Dorantes had as a teacher has been so important that although time has passed he is still perceived in the new generations of pediatric hematologists. Who better than his student and friend of many years, Dr. Carlos Álvarez Amaya, should describe what Professor Dorantes conveyed in his daily work to his students.

"Who, of all who had the good fortune to be his students, does not remember the deep interest aroused by his teachings; those afternoons in the Laboratory of Hematology where, with infinite patience next to the microscope, always using simple language, he was slowly developing his ideas. With admirable mental discipline he walked the stages of reasoning with impeccable logic and method. During the discussion of a case he moved from the careful analysis of clinical manifestations to observation and morphological study of the blood cells and bone marrow, reaching interpretation and diagnosis, after joint discussion. What most attracted our attention was the amazing systematization of his knowledge. In his lessons, he knew precisely how to delve into the data, the necessary resources, and the timely quote without hesitation or wavering. Educated in the rigid discipline of science, he did not admit as truth just what received the sanction and scientific confirmation. In his diagnoses he avoided any foundation that was not firm and final.

Each day, sometimes with the usual seriousness and others in an upbeat tone, he tried to correct and delete from his students the vagueness and inaccuracies of medical language. He criticized the ambiguous phrases as well as barbarisms, gallicisms and anglicisms that plague our terminology.

His devotion to teaching and his genuine desire to impart his knowledge and experience to young physicians was demonstrated."

Dr. Dorantes was a founding member of the Mexican Association for the Study of Hematology and the Latin American Cooperative Group of Haemostasis and Thrombosis. He was a member of the National Academy of Medicine, the Mexican Academy of Pediatrics and the National System of Researchers.

The Medical Association of the Hospital Infantil de México awarded him the "Medal Federico Gomez." The Mexican National Academy of Medicine awarded him the "Dr. Landa" prize for the discovery of Garcia disease. Governor Miguel Alemán Velasco honored him as "Illustrious Veracruzano." These were some of the many awards that Dr. Dorantes Mesa received during his career, which culminated on October 23, 2000 when the President of Mexico, Ernesto Cédillo, awarded him with the prize of "Medical Excellence".

We could also dwell on the human aspect of Dr. Samuel Dorantes Mesa, a universal, straight, honest and very humble man. For him there were no borders or nationalities, races and religions; only man and his ultimate expression of innocence, the child. His face lit up and transformed when he arrived at the hematology area with his patients ("little ones"). He rejected material wealth and perhaps was too innocent because he could never accept the existence of the evil of humanity. Despite his military background, he could not conceive of one human harming another human and less, harming a child. The discovery that one of his patients received inhalants in his elementary school provoked a strong impression, which peaked as a personal crusade in the last years of his professional activity.

A loving husband and father, Dr. Dorantes died of natural causes at 94 years of age on April 9, 2015, just a little more than 1 year after the loss of his beloved wife *Conchi*. Surrounded by his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, he journeyed to death in complete peace and quiet, as his life was.

Professor Samuel Dorantes Mesa taught with his example core values: love of work, truth, the study of science, love of nature and arts such as painting and music, and love for others, especially for children. His children, grandchildren, colleagues, students and friends will never forget him ... *Rest in peace.*