

In memory of Professor Dr Juan Rodríguez Soriano (1933-2010)

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A few days before the 40th Congress of the Spanish Society of Nephrology in Granada (October 2010), we received the sad news of the death of one of the most internationally-renowned Spanish nephrologists.

In the opening session he was paid a tribute and his loss was lamented. A minute silence was held in his memory at the symposium on "Tubulopathies that Progress to Chronic Kidney Disease in Adulthood".

Juan Rodríguez Soriano was born in Barcelona, where he completed his degree and doctorate degree in medicine with the highest grades. After two fruitful stays abroad, the first in Paris in the *Hôpital des Enfants Malades* in the Professor Pierre Royer's department, and later in the Albert Einstein hospital in New York with Professor Edelman, at the end of the seventies he returned to Barcelona and was the chief clinical officer in the Vall d'Hebron Children's Hospital for 3 years. In 1970, he took charge of the paediatric department in the *Hospital de Cruces*, where he worked as the Professor of paediatric medicine at the University of the Basque Country until his retirement in 2003.

He remained active after his retirement and continued publishing and participating in scientific meetings.

Married to a fellow health professional, the paediatric radiologist Dr María Jesús Vita, he had 3 children and in his last few years his 2 grandchildren brought joy to his life.

It is difficult to highlight one of the many qualities that Juan Rodríguez Soriano was blessed with. His incredible talent enabled him to approach any medical problem in an original way, both at the head of a patient's bed and in the research laboratory. He had an enormous capacity for work and his gift for communication made even the most complex presentations seem clear and easy to follow by any audience. A great

teacher, besides his work teaching undergraduates he played a part in the training of over 300 specialists in paediatric medicine and he has left an indelible impression through his teaching of Spanish paediatric nephrology.

Blessed with an overwhelming friendliness, tinged with a hint of irony, being in his company was a gift for those of us who were lucky enough to call him a friend.

He held posts of responsibility in national and European paediatric societies. He was a member of numerous scientific societies and as he himself remarks in a recent publication about paediatric nephrology, "Seldom does the remarkable event occur of a personal history being so well identified with the origins and development of a medical discipline." For many Spanish nephrologists, the paediatric side of their speciality is inextricably linked with Juan Rodríguez Soriano.

During his stay in the Albert Einstein hospital in New York he described proximal renal tubular acidosis for the first time, this being the most internationally recognised contribution to his field. But, possibly, it is not the most important.

The author of more than 300 scientific articles, most in journals with a high impact, he was an important author of both general and paediatric nephrology texts in the field of tubulopathies.

He lived with a passion for medicine. One only has to remember how he himself described his first visit to a hospital abroad. In time, those words have become a symbol for our country that adult and paediatric nephrology must be brought into harmony, "I can clearly remember my arrival in Paris at the beginning of October 1959 and the contact with my first patient who was suffering from haemolytic-uremic syndrome. In the nearby *Hôpital Necker*, in Prof. Jean Hamburger's department, nephrology was emerging as a different speciality to internal medicine, and there were continuous exchanges



Professor Doctor Juan Rodríguez Soriano

between the two hospitals. The joint sessions on anatomopathological correlation run by Dr Renée Habib linger in my memory. By discussing the kidney biopsies of hundreds of paediatric and adult patients new syndromes emerged which are now universally recognised: thrombotic microangiopathies (the anatomopathological basis of haemolytic-uremic syndrome), focal and segmental sclerosis, diffuse mesangial sclerosis, membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis, oligomeganephronic renal hypoplasia, segmental hypoplasia, etc. I recall that Prof. Hamburger was particularly sceptical about accepting these new paediatric kidney diseases, which forced Pierre Royer and Renée Habib to go to great lengths, session after session, to convince him of their clinical identity. What a privilege to have been present during those discussions between these authorities on medicine! On those grey winter Paris afternoons, shut in the laboratory run by Henri Lestrade, I learned that nephrology had to be upheld, as well as by anatomical pathology, by biochemistry. The development of techniques for studying the acid-base balance enabled me shortly afterwards, now in the USA, to describe a new type of renal tubular acidosis."

For the second author of this note, the loss of Juan not only means the loss of an admired and well-loved friend, but also the absence of the person he always considered his alter ego on the paediatric angle of Spanish nephrology. Drawing these lines to a close, the author is left with a feeling of anguish at not having expressed the importance of Juan Rodríguez Soriano's and, above all, at not having made it sufficiently clear how he admired and appreciated him. He was an inspiration as he always made the best of everything. For the first author, the loss of Juan means the loss of a master, and to some extent, of a second father.