



Reumatología Clínica

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In Memoriam

Enrique Asensi

Enrique Asensi has died. A man of good.

An example of a self-made man, he obtained a degree while working in multiple activities to help finance his studies. Once he became a doctor, he specialised under the direction of Dr. Pedro Barceló at the Hospital de Malalties Reumàtiques, which was then known as Centro Nacional de Lucha contra las Enfermedades Reumáticas (National Centre for the Fight against Rheumatic Diseases). After that, he worked as a rural doctor in a small town in Lleida, an experience which forever marked him and of which he kept many good memories (in his final years, he retired to live in the same place where his career had started). However, his desire to become a specialist was too strong and he returned to Barcelona, where he once again worked at the hospital where he spent the rest of his professional life. He was President of the Sociedad Española de Reumatología (by acclamation), of the Societat Catalana de Reumatologia, of the Congreso ILAR-93, Head of Service at the Hospital de Malalties Reumàtiques, author or co-author of many scientific publications... But it is not my intention to elaborate on a bulky and unnecessary curriculum, but rather to write about the person and friend that he was.

I first met him in the early 80s, when I started my specialist training. Enrique was then Clinical Chief and destiny had intended for us to have a close relationship. As the years passed, when he became Head of the Service, I was his deputy, and later I took over what had been his outpatient service. This is why I can say that he was one of the doctors who were most loved by his patients that I have ever seen. He was affectionate, looked them in the eye, spoke to them without unnecessary formalisms, he smiled at them, was interested in their life...Patients felt good around him, felt loved and in good hands. And he did all this because it is what his heart told him to do, not because of strategy manuals.

An accessible man, he was always there to offer the necessary support, a word of hope, or a piece of advice (even on a personal basis) for his co-workers, without making distinctions about position or occupation. When something needed to be corrected, he always indicated so in a clear way, but respectfully and without

fanfare. He created a relaxing atmosphere that made daily work very enjoyable.

Supporting young specialists was the motor of his activity as Head of Service, in his training years as well as during his career. Regarding this, I will share an anecdote that describes his personality perfectly. Back in the 80s, I was supposed to talk at a National Congress along with another colleague (the late Mariano Paso), but he could not attend the event. In our speech, we dared to question the usefulness of the Wright and Moll classification of spondyloarthropathies (does anybody even remember it?), and thus, their classification criteria, which for some was nothing short of a heresy. Also, back then, there were still some petty quarrels between different schools (especially in Catalonia) and this (although these squabbles are now almost moribund) would sometimes result in the lashing of young specialists by the established figures of the opposing school. Terrible stories were told, and I was terrified at the prospect. When Enrique got wind of this, he called me to his office and said "Do not worry, Moreno; I will be there". And there he was. And I do not know what he would have done or said if I had been uncomfortably challenged. However, do not doubt that Enrique would have helped me out in that difficult moment. When the moment came, I developed my topic and nothing happened: Dr. Asensi was there...Now that he is not here anymore, who will take care of our fears and insecurities?

In his later years, the loss of loved ones in a short period of time was a blow that he did not recover from and this undoubtedly contributed to worsening his health, despite the affection and care which his children professed him. As a result, we, his friends, did not see him as much as we would have wanted to until we were surprised by the news of his passing.

It is said that people do not really die until the moment when nobody remembers them. If this is the case, Enrique, you still have a long life ahead of you.

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José-Vicente Moreno Muelas