

Antonio López Borrasca (1926-2008)

Professor Antonio López Borrasca (82 years), one of the founders and most distinguished members of the Spanish Association of Hematology and Hemotherapy (AEHH) and of the Spanish Society of Thrombosis and Hemostasis (SETH), passed away in Salamanca (Spain) on November 11, 2008 after a prolonged illness. Professor López Borrasca was born in 1926 and, after completing his studies in Medicine at the Universities of Salamanca and Sevilla, joined the University of Salamanca and its University Hospital. Noteworthy from this early stage of his professional career is his contribution to the creation of the Institute of Clinical Research at Salamanca School of Medicine, where he held the post of first Director of the Hematology Unit.

In 1961 he moved to the still fledgling Faculty of Medicine of the University of Navarra to create and direct the Hematology Department at the University Hospital and, at the same time, to foment the teaching of and research in this discipline.

In 1975 he returned to the University of Salamanca as the first-ever Professor of Haematology (as an area of specialization in Spain) and to chair the Hematology Department of the University Hospital. He remained in these positions until his retirement in 1991, when he was designated Emeritus Professor.

Professor López Borrasca published over 300 papers in peer reviewed journals, as well as numerous chapters of books. However, his most salient contribution was probably the *Enciclopedia Hematológica Iberoamericana*, a comprehensive work in four volumes to which over 300 haematologists from around the world sharing common Iberian-American roots contributed. His interest in promoting the ties between haematologists on both sides of the Atlantic led him to organize the first Iberian-American International Congress and to open the doors of his department to many young physicians and scientists from Central and South America. He received public recognition from several universities and haematological societies (Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica) for his leadership skills. Professor López Borrasca was President of the Spanish Haematology Association and of the Spanish Society of Thrombosis and Haemostasia. He received over ten awards, including the gold medal from

the University of Salamanca and the Science and Research Award from the regional government of Castilla y León (Spain).

He was one of the most prolific mentors in the field in Spain, directing over 46 PhD students and 60 specialists in haematology, 13 of whom subsequently became heads of haematology departments at different institutions, five associate professors and four full professors. The fruits of this dedication are the so-called 'Borrasca School of Haematologists', one of the most prestigious in Spain, characterised by the concept of haematology as 'an integrated speciality where the clinic and laboratories coexist as a single department, benefiting significantly from the continuous interaction from the bedside to the bench'.

Professor López Borrasca had six children, some of whom are brilliant haematologists. During the last years of his life he was severely incapacitated by cardiac and vascular diseases, diabetes and Parkinson's, yet he continued to teach – now from the other side of the bed, as

a patient. His continuous lessons during this time included his permanent smile, tremendous patience, serene joy, increased interest in human beings (particularly his friends and their problems) and teaching young people that, at the end of the day, the only thing that matters is the dedication you put into your work (haematology was his passion) and to others (his family, his students and his patients). He liked to repeat, particularly towards the end, that his life would have been very different without the support of his wife, Fernanda, more than 50 years.

Professor López Borrasca always considered that haematology was the most 'internal' of all internal medicine subspecialties. Moreover, he said that in this unique speciality the doctor can and must combine the roles of clinician and

pathologist to find the answers to clinical problems in the laboratory: this has been a key to the success and progress achieved in haematology.

Thank you Professor López Borrasca for conveying to so many people this impassioned form of understanding hematology.

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