

# **In Memoriam of Dr. Luis Benítez-Bribiesca**

## **(1934-2015)**

### ***“Honor to whom honor is due”***

This is a memorial tribute with brief biographical and career information. Dr. Luis Benítez Bribiesca, member of the editorial board of our Journal of Cancerology and Member of the Governing Board of the National Cancer Institute during my second five-year term as Director General, passed away early Monday morning, November 30, 2015.

Dr. Benítez was born on July 14, 1934 in Mexico City, the son of Dr. Luis Benítez Soto, an eminent military pathologist and Mrs. Blanca Bribiesca. His father was a very important influence in his decision to go on to specialize in Pathology.

He entered Mexico's Military Medical School in 1950 where he graduated as a Medical Doctor in 1956. He was always an outstanding student, ranking in the top of his class every year and, as was to be expected, earned honorable mention status on his medical licensing examination in 1956. He completed his residency in Pathology at the Mallory Institute of Pathology at Boston City Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts under Dr. Stanley Robbins, one of the world's experts in Anatomic Pathology. Three years later he obtained a postgraduate fellowship in Experimental Pathology from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Germany, where he trained as a researcher for two years in Bonn.

The Director of the Master of Medical Physics program at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and responsible for the organization of the program's medical activities since its inception in 1997, his main activity was cancer research. He authored more than 100 scientific papers in Mexican and international journals, several books on biomedical topics, and numerous scientific articles published in newspapers. A member of the National System of Researchers, the Mexican Academy of Sciences, the Mexican Academy of Surgery, and Mexico's National Academy of Medicine. He was the author of the book "Una Ruta Hacia la Ciencia. La Preparación de un Científico" (A Path Toward Science, The Preparation of a Scientist), an editor for the journal Archives of Medical Research, editor emeritus of the Gaceta Médica de México (Medical Gazette of Mexico), as well as the founder and editor emeritus of the journal Patología (Pathology).

A scholar with great academic, intellectual, artistic, and scientific credentials and an overall commitment to the humanities, he had a number of remarkable talents. I remember an exceptional performance he gave a few years ago at a cultural session at the National Academy of Medicine, in which he sang arias from several operas, accompanied by a piano.

In 2000, Dr. David Khayat of the Organizing Committee for the Charter of Paris against Cancer of the French National Cancer Institute asked me to be a signatory of the Charter that was adopted at the World Summit Against Cancer, which was signed by noted oncologists from around the world. At the same time, they asked me to request the participation of another two oncology experts from Mexico so I invited Dr. Luis Benítez Bribiesca and Dr. Reyes Tamez

Guerra, an investigator at the Autonomous University of Nuevo León, who joined me as signatories in Paris. The Charter of Paris against Cancer signing ceremony took place at the Élysée Palace in Paris on February 4, 2000, where it was signed and witnessed by French President Jacques Chirac and Koïchiro Matsuura, the Director-General of UNESCO, and other high officials from the World Health Organization (WHO).

In 2003 I again asked Luis to accompany me to the Palace of Versailles in Paris where I was awarded the 11<sup>th</sup> Prix Mondial Cino Del Duca during the International Congress on Anti-Cancer Treatments. This turned out to be one of the best experiences in my life as his companionship was a great pleasure. He was quite a character, charming, playful, cultivated, and fluent in Spanish, English, French and German. I consider Luis to have been one of my best friends, I greatly admired him, and for me his absence is an irreparable loss. Everyone who knew and worked with him agree on his enormous humanity, in addition to his exceptional innate abilities for teaching, always reflected in his service to the Mexican Army, the Military Medical School and, naturally, all his military and civilian students, such as one of his best and most brilliant disciples, Horacio Astudillo de la Vega, as well as all of Mexico's medical community.

Rest in Peace.

JAIME G. DE LA GARZA-SALAZAR

*Editor-in-Chief*