In Memoriam

Juan Carlos Romero, MD
1937–2008

Juan Carlos Romero, or Carlitos, as his friends call him, was born in Mendoza, Argentina, on September 15, 1937, and passed away surrounded by family and friends in Jackson, Miss, on December 30, 2008. He studied medicine at the School of Medicine of the National University of Cuyo in Mendoza, from which he graduated in 1964. Carlos was a brilliant medical student, distinguished by a consuming thirst for knowledge and by a powerful and inquisitive mind.

In 1962, while still a student, Carlos initiated his research career under the direction of Prof Juan Carlos Fasciolo, head of the Department of Physiopathology and one of the pioneers of research on the renin-angiotensin system and its relation to arterial hypertension. In 1964, Carlos published his first scientific article, "The Renin Content of the Blood of Human and Dogs Under Several Conditions."[1] In 1968, he published a seminal article demonstrating that low sodium intake increases plasma renin and aldosterone secretion in humans.[2] In 1967, Carlos came to the United States to further his research training under the direction of Prof Sydney W. Hoobler, director of the Hypertension Division at the University of Michigan Medical School, where he continued investigating the contribution of the renin-angiotensin system to the pathogenesis of hypertension.

In 1974, Carlos joined the staff of the Mayo Clinic, Division of Nephrology, in Rochester, Minn, where he rose to the rank of professor of physiology and medicine, and his research career flourished uninterruptedly until the time of his death. At the Mayo Clinic, Carlos established an internationally recognized research program focusing on the characterization of the complex mechanisms linking the renin-angiotensin system, prostaglandins, NO, and oxidative stress to the regulation of renal function and blood pressure in hypertension. He was also interested in renovascular disease and renal ischemia, and, along with his colleagues at the Mayo Clinic, using computerized tomography, developed methods that improved diagnosis of this disease and provided new insights into the underlying mechanisms. In 2007, the National Institutes of Health recognized the importance of this work and awarded Carlos a substantial program project grant to study "Irreversible Kidney Injury in Renovascular Hypertension." Carlos was very proud of this crowning achievement.

Carlos's work was recognized by many scientific organizations, and he received numerous awards, too many to enumerate here. However, it is worthwhile to mention that, in 2008, he received the Novartis Award for Hypertension Research from the American Heart Association Council for High Blood Pressure Research. This award is considered the "hypertension Nobel Prize," and he knew the relevance of this prize and was extremely happy and proud for this recognition. Carlos was unquestionably one of the giants in the field of hypertension research. He was also an outstanding teacher and received the Teacher of the Year Award at the Mayo School of Medicine. Graduate students and fellows from all over the world trained with Carlos, and they loved and respected him and will miss him dearly.

Another important aspect of Carlos was his magnetic and warm personality. Everyone he met instantly became his friend for life, and, as a consequence, he had friends all over the world. Carlos was a wonderful storyteller, and had an encyclopedic knowledge of many subjects, including music, painting, and cinematography. A sensitive man, he was known to cry when listening to a great tenor, such as Luciano Pavarotti, sing "Una Furtiva Lacrima" (A Furtive Tear). When you became a friend of Carlos, you could not help but to love him.

As a mutual friend, Carlos Feldstein, recently wrote to one of us:

> "It is difficult for all of us who were friends of Carlos to assimilate the terrible spiritual blow, the empty feeling in our lives that the physical disappearance of our dear friend Carlos represents. As it surely happened to you as well, it is very difficult for us to describe only with words the profound feeling of sadness that covers all of us who had the pleasure and

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privilege to share life and feelings with Carlos. We always will embrace his optimistic view of life, his generosity, and his great moral sense, which will guide and encourage us."

We and all of his many friends in the scientific community will deeply miss Carlos. Of course our loss, though immeasurable, does not compare with that of his dear wife and colleague Dr Jane Reckelhoff; his 2 daughters, Patricia and Gabriela; his 2 grandchildren, Carlitos and Elijah, the "geniuses," as Carlos frequently referred to them; and his friend and ex-wife, Dr Silvia Divinetz.

Juan Carlos Romero was a giant in science and friendship. He has left us, but his memory and work will remain with us. We love you, Juan Carlos Romero "the Great."

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References

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