

Editorial

The integral neurosurgeon: A tribute

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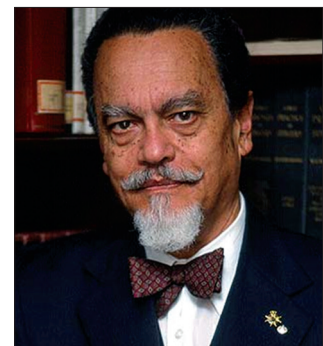
Three weeks ago, I saw him for the last time in the Thursday session of the National Academy of Medicine. He looked tired and with great effort managed to pass from the table of the Board of Directors, where he was his Perpetual Secretary, to the Auditorium to listen to the presentation of the afternoon.

There were two topics I wanted to consult with him which was the last time we spoke: euthanasia and especially in patients in a vegetative state and minors. His judgment and reflexive orientation was what I heard: *“These patients are very complicated cases, we must study them very carefully. Ensure your diagnosis, and only with the concept of a committee of experts consider the request of parents as a clear exception to the protocol that governs us.”* He firmly suggested: *“We still shouldn’t open this sluice gate where the consensus is very difficult.”*

The second issue was about the Pro dignified death Foundation, of which he was the President and Promotor. Two days later I went to visit its headquarters. I spoke to the Executive Director with the conviction that all doctors should help to socialize their work. I did not know that a few weeks later my dear Professor would make the final decision of his days. He left from his home early Saturday surrounded by the warmth of his wife and the affection of his children.

Defining Juan Mendoza-Vega, what a difficult task! A gentleman and a great conversationalist; the one with kind talk and wise advice. Conciliatory but firm in his convictions and affections. Humanist and historian, possessor of a great culture wrapped in a simplicity that captivated. I loved his easy verb and his nostalgic letters. The ability to improvise, and how he captured the auditorium by moving it to the rhythm of his words; he had the capacity to end discussions – with great common sense and embellishing his contributions with the appropriate historical quotation.

Poor in material goods but with spiritual treasures that he enjoyed until the last day – the affection and the recognition of his colleagues one of them. I never heard an acid comment about those who attacked him; he let the wind, without resistance, take them away. He was aware of his limitations and honest to humbly ask for the ability of his peers in complex surgical cases. Always worried about his patients; they chased away that little clumsy demon – arrogance – that is in the soul of every one of the neurosurgeons and who often are paid by the sick.



Juan Mendoza-Vega
(15 February, 1933 to 7 October, 2017)

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Many individual stamps marked his identity: the good Spanish, the fine manners, and the peculiar form of his clothes. Not all people can pull-off a bowtie, but there are individuals who give their personal touch to the garments they wear that make them stamps of distinction and elegance. This was Juan Mendoza: mustaches, bowtie, and cape. He made us remember the figure of Dumas and his three musketeers, always ready to fight to defend

with his writings the honor of Queen Anne defeating the unjust Cardinal Richelieu that exists in life.

Goodbye dear Professor; from the celestial balcony that you have reserved next to Asenjo you will enjoy the notes of Krivoy who was ahead of you by a few weeks.

Your students will remember you with gratitude and we will always be next to Mary Victoria and children, your other treasure.

Memorial to Juan Mendoza Vega, A Consummate Neurosurgeon and Man of the World

I remember meeting Juan Mendoza Vega as a Neurosurgeon on many of our trips to South America. I was immediately impressed by this man's presence, his genteel nature, always a gentleman, kind, and very well read and informed. He was a wise man and was well respected. It radiated from his demeanor, erect posture, and thoughtful responses to questions. He was an immediately captivating man.

It was always a pleasure to see him for he embodied what all strive to become as a fine physician but cannot equal. His words were wise. I remember his love for music and the arts. Professor Juan Mendoza Vega was an intelligent educated man.

His students were his students for life as he taught more than neurosurgery. He taught Humanity, Humility,

Culture, and Wisdom. He was a gift of Columbia to the world of Neurosurgery and to all in the world.

Whenever he came into a room or joined a conversation, his gentlemanly demeanor always elevated to conversation and added to the decorum of the discussion.

I only had the opportunity to know him briefly on the many occasions. I saw him over 30 years but to have been his pupil was a gift that all would treasure.

I, for one, was influenced by Juan Mendoza Vega in my life. He is a role model of what a physician should be and what a neurosurgeon should be beyond that. He was a mentor to many. I will miss his presence and his wisdom as many others will. Neurosurgery and Humanity lost a fine soul with the passing of Juan Mendoza Vega.

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