

Jaume Rotés Querol

We have recently been informed of the sad news of the death of Dr Jaume Rotés Querol. It is difficult to summarize his personality and charisma. Those of us who have been at his side define him as our mentor, but he has been more than a teacher of rheumatology. His human profile equaled or surpasses he knowledge he had of our specialty, his “trade” as he liked to refer to it.

His genius, as well as his common sense, marked his professional career since his infancy in Balaguer (Lleida). He liked to explain the first years of his youth as well as those of his university years, mixing facts with anecdotes. In that sense, he liked to recount how he did not finish his high-school studies due to the civil war, but managed to present himself to a test in which “he only had to raise his hand” and that way obtained his diploma.

He then studied medicine in the Faculty of Medicine of Barcelona and at 26 went to Paris where he was mentored by Stanislas de Sèze in the Hôpital Lariboisière. Destiny sent him to the spa at Aix-Les-Bains, where he was a collaborator of Jacques Forestier. In 1950, and thanks to an observation based on ingenuity and curiosity, Dr Jaume Rotés suspected that certain ossifying alterations of the spinal column did not fit into any pattern described up until then and, from there, they both described a new disease: senile ankylosing hyperostosis or Forestier-Rotés disease.

After returning to Barcelona, he presented his doctoral thesis “Contribution to the study of bone and joint manifestations of brucellosis”, directed by Agustí Pedro-Pons. In 1957, he was named head of the Rheumatology Dispensary of the Medical Clinic of the Hospital Clínic and in 1969, director of the Professional School of

Rheumatology of the Faculty of Medicine. This period saw the formation of numerous rheumatologists, not only from Cataluña but from all of Spain, who later went on to propagate his manner of exploring and understanding rheumatology. I do not wish to set examples, because I would forget more than one, but I do wish to emphasize his joint work with José Muñoz Gómez, José Antonio del Olmo, and María Antonia Brancós, who remained with him as his closest collaborators when the Department of Rheumatology of the Hospital Clínic. Since then, many other rheumatologists have incorporated his clinical vision of the patient with a rheumatic disease into ourselves and have followed the “trade” he taught us.

His knowledge has been collected in publications which were ahead of their times. Among them I would like to mention *La spondyloartrite ankylosante*, a collaboration with J. Forestier and F. Jacqueline during his stay in France; *Semiología de los reumatismos*, a masterpiece on the methodology of interrogation and examination of the locomotor apparatus; *Estudios sobre el síndrome psicógeno del aparato locomotor*, an intuitive work based on the observation and description of Pain-related diseases, psychological diseases of the locomotor system and, finally, *La gota*, a treatise on a disease that interested him especially, maybe because he himself had it. In addition, his other publications include numerous original articles among which I would like to single out “Joint laxity as a factor for locomotor apparatus alterations,” because this was the article in which this clinical syndrome was described in 1957, in collaboration with A. Arganyo. Finally, he wrote many reviews and editorials and, as an anecdote, he collaborated regularly in a humor section of the Journal of the Lliga Catalana de Reumatologia.

During his professional life he occupied numerous posts in scientific societies related to our specialty and was recognized for his work, both in the medical field as in society. Dr Rotés was a founding member and president of the Societat Catalana de Reumatologia and president of the Sociedad Española de Reumatología, of which he was later named Honor President. In addition, he was an honorary member of the American Rheumatism Association. He obtained numerous recognitions throughout his life, such as the Narcis Monturiol medal, but the most relevant one was La Creu de Sant Jordi, given by the Generalitat de Catalunya in 2002 in recognition of his prestige as a specialist in rheumatology, emphasizing the disease that carries his name among his many contributions.

His editorial work included the fact that he was a member and director of the *Revista Española de Reumatología*, and indirectly enhanced its figure in this area with the creation of a specialized virtual library of rheumatology in the context of the Josep Laporte library, with the support of the Spanish Society of Rheumatology. During the presidency of one of his most beloved disciples, Jordi Carbonell, the virtual library Jaume Rotés Querol was created.

Photograph taken by Prof Eliseo Pascual Gómez.

But describing his figure would be incomplete if I did not include one of his main concerns, one that would take a large part in his life: helping the patient. As he mentioned in a recent interview: "There is nothing that surpasses the sensation of being able to help a sick person." Those of us who have known him, both in the hospital and helping him with his private practice, know this to be the truth and not just words. Dr Rotés liked to visit and talk with his patients and did not conceive a visit without a good interrogation and an integral examination of his patients, in a cordial environment. It was a part of his life; in fact, he carried out his private practice up until a little more than a year ago.

During the last year he developed another facet, the literary one. In this vein, he wrote an autobiographical book, *Retalls*, "pieces," which I am certain, would not lack on

his direct style, laced with fine humor. He was very excited about its publication; it only remained for him to choose a cover design.

In one of the last conversations we had, right before his death, he told me: "Enjoy life." Personally, I think he lived with intensity, between medicine, his literary surroundings and his friends in Calafell. He liked to say that during the last year, after retiring from private practice, he had found it pleasurable to take a walk and enjoy the little things in life. He probably had found the peace that was so difficult to find during his untiring life. Rest in peace, my dear teacher, Dr Jaume Rotés.

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