

EDITORIAL

The Power of Antonio Prudente's Dream

History is the narrative that turns eternal the memory of events and facts related to people, institutions and countries. In this edition, journalist Cristina Iori introduces the journey of the physician and teacher Antonio Prudente (1906-1965), founder of the Cancer Hospital. The report about his dreams and fight for the creation of a research center for cancer prevention and treatment projects light on essential aspects of the medical practice: idealism, humanity and seriousness. When concentrating all of his life efforts in the construction of a hospital, Prudente has elevated the level of Brazilian Oncology.

In 1947, as a medical student, I had the privilege of meeting Doctor Prudente during a university competition in order to rise funding for the construction of the Cancer Hospital. Following his orientation, I have looked for specialization with a pathologist, L.V. Ackerman, at Washington University, St. Louis, USA. When returning, I participated of the creation of the Pathology Department in the Cancer Hospital.

Doctor Prudente had advised me to study Pathology abroad because he considered Brazil needed urgently qualified professionals in this specialty. In the Cancer Hospital, the Department of Pathology was used as a tool for the improvement of cancer diagnoses and treatment by young resident surgeons.

Very demanding, he has always asked for freezing exams to evaluate the margins of safety for the surgery. During 16 years, I learned with professor Prudente not just Oncology, but also the importance of the doctor-patient relationship.

In the fifties the surgery was the most important and invasive treatment for cancer. Complex surgical interventions represented a challenge for involved pathologists. In the Cancer Hospital, it was formed an elite of surgeons commanded by Prudente: Henrique Melega, Alfredo Abrão, George Arié, Fairbanks Barbosa, Fernando Gentil and others that escape from my memory.

Doctor Prudente was also responsible for the creation of the first medical residence program in radiotherapy, in 1955. It was one of his most persuaded goals that the Cancer Hospital graduate specialists on several areas of Oncology. For this reason, he founded the School of Cancerology "Celestino Bourroul", the first in Brazil. This became an University of São Paulo Complementary Institute in 1961.

Along with tremendous financial difficulties, Doctor Prudente managed Cancer Hospital following strictly the principles dictated by his dignity. He never stood back of his ideal in offering excellence in the assistance to cancer patient, independently of their origin and social class. When dying, in 1965, he left a legacy not just represented by a building, but a powerful idea built with his strong will. Nowadays, a fully rendered idea, five decades have passed. Today, Brazilian physicians have become world reference in research and treatment on Oncology.

Professor Prudente had no children in life, however, he left a legion of successors that are as proud of him, as well as he would be of us.

Humberto Torloni

Director of the Cancer Hospital Research Center