Recognition of Dr. Silvestre Frenk with the “Dr. Eduardo Liceaga” Medal

On April 29, 2009, Dr. Silvestre Frenk, prestigious medical graduate of the Hospital Infantil de Mexico Federico Gómez (HIMFG), was decorated by the President of the Mexican Republic, Lic. Felipe Calderon Hinojosa, with the “Dr. Eduardo Liceaga” Medal.

The following are the words from Dr. Frenk as he addressed the attendees during this event.

“Never before have I deserved any award. This experience, which is for me unique, makes me proud and is a vector for remembrance and emotional tribute to Eduardo Liceaga, ‘the most eminent physician in Mexico, the bridge between Miguel Francisco Jiménez and Ignacio Chavez’ in the words of Dr. Jesus Kumate.

For the generous provision of the colleagues who proposed such a high dignity for me and for the kind consideration that the commission gave to the proposal, I owe a great debt of gratitude. Obligated and very pleased as well, I am grateful to Dr. Enrique Ruelas for his high references as to my personage. After the required ceremonious language, the depth of friendship is well perceived.

Of course, having assumed the commitment to succeed for Mexico, the country that nobly and generously received my family of origin, it proved for us to be a natural act, a matter of honor. I adapted my soul, heart, religious conviction, culture, language, habits and ways and for me since then, also always my homeland. It is a gift from God to have been blessed with the perfect companion and with her to have created and raised a beautiful family of seven talented offspring, having been able to instil in them the same sense of deep gratitude and responsibility for the homeland, a matter of duty of course but also for having granted generous, definitive, and defining asylum to three of their four grandparents, and the obligation to give back to their maximum potential has been for them the most gratifying of civic duties. They are complying with their responsibilities.

When my peculiar academic record is seen, it must be remembered that for those of us who were students before and during the human disaster known as World War II, we did not have such lofty and numerous training programs that were preconceived and carefully guided such as the ones our students enjoy today.

During those times many of us had to prepare our own plans in terms of our individual educational and economic possibilities or, in my case, also social and intellectual idealizations. I searched for, and to my good fortune found, opportunities for combining high-level biomedical research with the classical medical practice, to alternate during my youth, third-level hospital activity with medical assistance in the rural environment and, congruently, also obtain formal training and accreditation in the sciences of public health.

I hold legitimate pride in having worked in the “bosom” of pediatrics in Mexico. I had the rare fortune of serving in its three major hospitals, namely, Hospital Infantil de México Federico Gómez for 12 years, Hospital de Pediatría, Centro Medico Nacional Siglo XXI, Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social for another 12 years, and for 18 years at the Instituto Nacional de Pediatría. During the last 2 years, I had the honor of serving as its General Director, convinced that in this way one complies honorably with the responsibility contracted with their colleagues. I mention this because Eduardo Liceaga, as well as Miguel Otero, were the real forgers of Mexican institutional pediatrics.

Before continuing, I strongly associate myself with the congratulations deservedly received by the other honorees today, as a splendid sign that successful passage through life is appreciated and rewarded. Clearly, it must be a reason for the happiness that we know, as the privilege of being recognized.

It has not been to achieve merits so as to eventually gain such an unexpected, unpredictable stimulus that we work in the course of our professional stages.
To be able to deliver has always been a common motor and guide. Each one of those recognized today must have reacted before such a special stimulus according to their unique emotional frame, in keeping with their professional and specific field of work. It is easy, however, to identify a common denominator: each one to have worked to the maximum of their intentions and capabilities and to have performed for the common ideal of achieving optimal health for those who are part of the noble people of Mexico and, by extension, all people of the world.

In the words of the great poet/doctor, the German Friedrich-Shiller, we have already seen ‘three ages of man,’ and we are fully enjoying the gift of witnessing this dramatic evolution of the biomedical sciences. We see in a combination of nostalgia and envy and, in my case, immense gratitude, his wonderful contributions to clinical diagnosis and treatment.

In fact, today we confront attitudes and behaviors, which are solid grounds for criticism. But occasions such as the one today strengthen our enthusiasm and optimism in the sense that beyond fashion and ways, Mexican medicine has strong roots. By its own momentum and support from new well-supported laws, protection of ethical and scientific precepts which, with the devotion of spiritual heirs, with fervor and dedication we cultivate.

I am grateful for the favor of your attention.