

Portrait *In memoriam* of Professor Dr. Carlos Pérez Treviño, 1924-2017[§]

*Semblanza In memoriam del Maestro
Dr. Carlos Pérez Treviño, 1924-2017[§]*

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I will divide my exposition in two parts. The first one is a much summarized review of his trajectory, fundamentally based in his autobiography; and the second one will consist in arguing why Doctor Treviño was an exceptional teacher.

FIST PART

Dr. Carlos Pérez Treviño was born in Tampico, Tamaulipas, on January 26, 1924. He came to Mexico City to study Medicine at the UNAM. When he finished his studies, he chose the town of Tantima, to carry through his social service. Getting there was not easy, because the only form of transportation to get there was on horseback. There was no piped water, electricity or drainage. He soon made friends with the community characters. Certainly, the easiness of making good friends was a trait of doctor Treviño throughout his life. After he attained his medical degree, he worked as a physician in PEMEX, in the oil field of Cerro Azul, also in Tamaulipas. In 1951 he took a six-month pediatric course at the Children's Hospital of Mexico, returning to work at the Civil Hospital of Tampico, combining his public work with private practice. After a year, he would make a transcendent decision that would change his life. He was told by some friends that at the Driscoll Children's Hospital in Corpus Christi, were needed physicians who spoke Spanish. He was accepted almost without speaking the language in a program without university recognition. Anyhow, his performance made a very good impression and then he was enrolled in a formal pediatrics

residence during two years, endorsed by the Baylor University. During his residency, he became interested in children with congenital heart disease, so at the end of the course, he applied to be accepted in the Pediatric Cardiology Subspecialty at the Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, also endorsed by Baylor University. As the end of his residency in Pediatric Cardiology he was approached by both, Dr. Latson, head of hemodynamics, and Dr. Dan McNamara, director of the course, who invited him to join them at the Children's Hospital in Houston; while Dr. Sloan, Director in Corpus Christi, asked him to organize the Pediatric Cardiology section in his hospital. He accepted this last proposal. After a few months working in Corpus Christi, he received a letter from Dr. Lázaro Benavides, deputy director of the Children's Hospital of Mexico, inviting him to head the new Cardiology Department of that hospital. Unfortunately when arriving to Mexico City, the bad news was that the project of the new department had been canceled due to the 1957 earthquake. But the good news was that he obtained a grant from the United States Department of State to attend prestigious pediatric cardiology centers: the Children's Medical Center in Boston at Harvard University; the Mayo Clinic in Rochester Minnesota, and finally the National Heart Institute, in Washington.

After his return in 1962, he was invited by Dr. Federico Gómez, to found the Pediatric Cardiology Service at the Pediatric Hospital in the recently inaugurated National Medical Center. Here he continued his clinical investigations initiated in the United States.

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Already as head of the service, Dr. Treviño presented and approved the Board of Pediatric Cardiology in New York. In 1972 he was admitted as a member of the National Academy of Medicine. In 1973 he published the first book of his specialty in the IMSS.

SECOND PART, THE TEACHER

In this part, I will communicate my impressions as a student of Dr. Treviño; it will be from a personal and partial perspective, because of the affection I have for him. Although he is no longer with us, he still lives in my memory.

The life of Dr. Carlos Pérez Treviño is a clear example of how a good person is built. Jean Paul Sartre affirms that in the human being, the existence precedes the essence, that is to say, in simple words, a man first is born, finds himself in the world, and then he is done. This building is based on our fundamental property: the exercise of individual freedom through the will. A will that, in the case of Dr. Treviño, chose to forge with determination from rural medicine, in Tantima, to become a benchmark, nationally and worldly, of Mexican pediatric cardiology.

When I finished my rotation in his service, as a resident of cardiology, in the Cardiology Hospital of the National Medical Center in 1980, I was invited by him to join his service as a staff member, at the end of my training. Dr. Treviño had been Senior Professor of the cardiology postgraduate course for many years, and it would still be for several more years. So, he had been a cardiologists and pediatric cardiologist's trainer from Mexico and Latin America for many generations.

Why I accepted his invitation if I did not feel ready for that great responsibility? First, because of Dr. Treviño's way to be; his deeply respectful treatment, always speaking to me in a formal fashion. I never was scolded despite my ignorance and mistakes. Second, he loved sick children, he felt sorry for them and he understood their parents. Third, he knew a lot. I remember that in the very enjoyable anatomic-clinical sessions, a pathologist dedicated to congenital heart disease participated. Dr. Treviño saw with much greater precision the diagnoses than the pathologist, which he tactfully corrected frequently. Fourth, it favored a pleasant

atmosphere in his department. Fifth, he had charisma and natural leadership. I realized that he was recognized and respected by everyone and, in spite of his seriousness, he was likeable.

Working at his side in the department I learned to know him more deeply; his thought was eminently concrete and practical; he was not interested in metaphysical questions, simplicity drew him well; he was not afflicted by vanity, that in a greater or lesser degree we have as specialists. Solemnity was not in his agenda, and he had the capacity to recognize abilities and limitations in everyone of us, favoring the former and intelligently trying to attenuate the later. The atmosphere in the service was of easygoing camaraderie; the sessions in which angiocardigrams were interpreted were very good, participating all of us. As a good teacher he was tolerant and flexible, our misinterpretations were part of the learning, but he always tried to deepen the study and attention of patients.

Dr. Pérez Treviño sought and got the extending training of his team abroad. He sent Honorio Santamaría to Birmingham, Alabama with Dr. Bargerón, while Santiago Jiménez and Arturo Martínez went to Madrid with Dr. Quero and Dra. María Victoria de la Cruz, respectively.

After a year, one day he told me «you are going to Boston with Dr. Nadas and Dr. Van Praagh, what do you think?» «Of course, I accepted, but my English is very bad» «Do not worry he said, it will improve there».

In 1982, while I was at Children's Hospital in Boston, Dr. Treviño organized in Mexico the First Latin American Congress of Pediatric Cardiology, which is now in its fifteenth edition, held in Barcelona. Furthermore, he was a founding member of the National Association of Cardiologists of Mexico, which every two years, in its national congresses, awards a prize that bears his name.

In one occasion he reviewed and translated a work that I sent to the World Congress in New York. The work was accepted for oral presentation. We went together, and as there was no financing he managed to rent a small room with bunk beds in the YMCA of Manhattan. The experience was very hilarious, as during the day we were dressed up in the congress cocktail in the UN reception hall,

while at night we had a sandwich in the bunk bed. In another occasion we were both invited to the Central American Cardiology Congress, under better conditions, although I suspect that it was due to his recommendation.

Over time, I discovered two additional qualities, not very common among chiefs and teachers. The first: it happened that with technological advances, for example, in echocardiography, Dr. Treviño was surpassed by us. I never noticed that it affected him negatively, but on the contrary, he urged us to keep moving forward. The second, which I want to emphasize as very valuable, was his ability to recognize that he was wrong. Since he favored an environment of freedom, we could dissent and then, confronted with a correct observation of any of us, he would typically say: «Wait a second», meditated a little bit more and closed the question with a «you are right». All this, consolidated and legitimized his authority that he never intended to impose.

Finally, I do not want to ignore a socializing habit of Dr. Treviño, which consisted in that

when the rotation of the residents of cardiology for the service concluded, he invited them to his home to enjoy a barbecue in his garden. The staff physicians with their wives were invited guests. His generosity was manifest. There, in a relaxed atmosphere we all spend time together. Later in the night, with his guitar Dr. Treviño sang Huastec «sones» with a lot of feeling. Almost to finish, I present to you what was most dear to him, his appreciable family.

Finally I would like to thank Dr. Carlos Pérez Treviño for being as a teacher a lighthouse that guided my training in this fascinating specialty, and whose light, at least in part, I have tried to share with you.

Thank you very much!!

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