

## Dr Martina Bescós García

Just a few weeks ago, Dr Martina Bescós García, the first Spanish woman cardiologist and a charter member of the Sociedad Española de Cardiología (Spanish Society of Cardiology) and of the Sociedad Aragonesa de Cardiología (Aragonese Society of Cardiology), passed away in her home in Zaragoza, Spain. She represented Aragonese cardiology throughout all of Spain, and Spanish cardiology throughout all of Europe with notable dignity.

She was born in Zaragoza in 1912, the daughter of a physician. She received her degree from the School of Medicine of the University of Zaragoza, with extraordinary brilliance, in a class of no more than 40 students, only 2 of whom were women. Her academic record predominantly includes distinctions such as magna cum laude. In 1923, she received the Extraordinary Prize for Academic Achievement from the School of Medicine of Zaragoza and, in 1925, the Extraordinary Doctorate Award from the Universidad Complutense. Throughout her studies, she boarded at the school with a scholarship in Medical Pathology in the department of Prof Royo Villanova. In the summertime and during the final years of her studies, she took courses at the Casa de Salud (Health House) Valdecilla in Santander, which, at that time, was one of the few postgraduate institutes in Spain. It was there that her vocation for cardiology took root, as she followed in the footsteps of Dr José Antonio Lamelas who, recently arrived from Boston, had been placed in charge of the corresponding department in that highly prestigious hospital. She attended courses regularly at the Royal Free Hospital and St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London.

Once she had received her degree, she went to Vienna, to the clinic directed by Professor Falta in Kaiserin Elisabeth hospital, as a research fellow. Upon her return to Spain, she worked for 3 years in Hospital Clínico San Carlos in Madrid, under the direction of the eminent master Carlos Jiménez Díaz. There she was named Head of the General Pathology Outpatient Clinic and Assistant in practical classes. Coinciding with her stay in Madrid, the Instituto de Investigaciones Médicas (Institute of Medical Research), which would later become the Fundación Jiménez Díaz (Clínica de la Concepción), was inaugurated, and the young doctor worked at Hospital Clínico San Carlos in the morning and devoted her afternoons to research in the new institution. The upheaval of the Spanish civil war obliged her to turn down a Conde de Cartagena research grant to continue her studies in the United States with Dr Soskin, and she took a position at Hospital Pompiliano in Zaragoza, where she was in charge of 30 beds for patients with acute cardiothoracic diseases. In 1938, she began working in the clinic of Dr Lorenzo López Buera, a prestigious lung and heart specialist in Zaragoza, who she married.



A few years after the inauguration of the Hospital Clínico of Zaragoza, Dr Bescós joined the General Pathology Department, which was directed successively by Prof Pedro Ramón y Cajal Vinós and Prof Gabriel Guillén Martínez. Her activity as clinical chief and assistant in practical classes became focused first on electrocardiography and later on electrophysiology and the study of cardiac arrhythmias. The new Hospital Clínico Universitario of Zaragoza was inaugurated in 1975, and Dr Bescós was named head of the Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology Section and assistant professor of practical classes in the Cardiology Service, a position that she held until she retired in 1982.

I find it impossible to recall my years of work in this hospital without bringing to mind, and always in the foreground, the unmistakable and endearing figure of Dr Bescós: slight, active, apparently oblivious to everything but her electrocardiograms, which always overflowed from the pockets of her white coat, but without missing a single detail of all that went on around her that had to do with the cardiac patient or cardiology. Many generations of physicians and cardiologists have benefited

greatly from her teachings and from her constant example as a hardworking woman who was devoted to her career. She was also totally devoted to her family. Doctor Bescós was widowed in 1953 with 6 children, the youngest only a few months old, who she had to provide for in those difficult years by making a singular effort, which undoubtedly took energy, dedication and enthusiasm. She was an absolutely exemplary mother. Her interest in helping the most disadvantaged led her to work in hospitals in central Africa. I don't know how she still had the strength to tend to the innovative cultivation of fruit trees on her property in La Cartuja, near Zaragoza.

Her son, Lorenzo López Bescós, a dear friend and companion in the adventure of the Sociedad Española de Cardiología, undoubtedly received the dominant genes

of his parents for the vocation for cardiology, who, through him, continue the work that they started, in a nearly secular continuum.

Thus, a life both long and fruitful, during which she did many things and did them well. In my last visit, when she passed away, I was impressed by her unusually youthful aspect and also by the expression on her face, smiling and peaceful. I recalled the advice of Kung-tse: "At birth, everyone laughs and only you cry. Live life in such a way that, when you die, everyone cries and you can smile."

Spanish cardiology mourns her loss, accompanying her esteemed family with respect and affection. Rest in peace.

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