

## In memoriam

## Félix Pérez-Villa



We write these lines thinking of the exceptional man who has left us and of the immense void that his loss represents for his family, friends, colleagues, and patients.

Félix Pérez-Villa gained his degree in medicine from the University of Barcelona in 1985 and his doctorate in 2001. He was a resident physician in cardiology at *Hospital Clínic de Barcelona* and subsequently worked at *Hospital Vall d'Hebron*. He spent a training period in the Montreal Heart Institute and, shortly after his return, in 1995, he returned to *Hospital Clínic de Barcelona*, where he achieved the highest possible professional rank (senior consultant) and where he worked until his recent death in July 2021. He was an all-round cardiologist, combining a heavy clinical load with both teaching and research.

For more than 20 years, his work was devoted to heart failure and heart transplantation. Together, we designed the creation of the current Heart Failure Unit and managed to start the Heart Transplant Program of *Hospital Clínic*, where the first transplant was carried out in May 1998. Subsequently, he also collaborated in the implantation of the first long-term ventricular assist device in our center. He was and will be a key figure in this field and a much loved and respected member among the small number of people belonging to the great heart failure family in Spain.

Félix was an exceptional clinician, able to resolve the most complex cases using analysis, logic, experience and his intuition, which rarely failed. Although clinical skills are more difficult to

measure than technical and scientific abilities, it suffices to say that Félix was the go-to person when a case became complicated or when a difficult decision had to be made; he was the person for whom the room fell silent at meetings in the expectation of hearing his opinion; the person who resolved in a breath a puzzle we had been battling with for hours. All this was perceived by his patients, who, since his death, have sent multiple messages of gratitude and affection. His legacy will live on in the lives regained, in the transplanted hearts that defied death, and the patients who speak daily of a second chance.

Félix also had a special talent for teaching. In addition to training residents (he was first a tutor and then the teaching coordinator of the Cardiovascular Institute), he also trained many specialists from other countries who came to do rotations with him and who remember him with affection and admiration. Ward rounds at his side were a true privilege. As is indispensable in a good mentor, Félix knew how to listen, interpret and advise, always putting the interests of those who looked to him for support first. Any conversation with him in the corridor could become a life lesson, while, among laughter, he would speak truths that could be slowly savoured later when there was more time.

We will especially miss his irony and refined sense of humor. His humor was sometimes sharp, sometimes black, and sometimes British; he was able to play down and turn any situation into the surreal to the point of the absurd. He often used his humor as a shield to make his ability to see things too clearly easier to bear. We will miss his easy conversation, full of tales of passionate trips and adventures that took him to the ends of the earth. He made highly entertaining references to science fiction, where he sometimes found surprising clues to understand reality.

May *the Force* be with you, beloved friend, now that we feel your absence. Thank you for being the best companion possible in the journey we have shared! You are now on your final journey, carrying with you, like luggage, the infinite affection and gratitude of those who surrounded you. Farewell, mentor, friend, colleague. You will always be our inspiration.

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