

“Doctor of men and souls”

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This label was used as the title of a report in the journal of CREMESP in 2004⁽²⁾, from the consecrated literary work of Taylor Caldwell, “Dear and Glorious Physician”⁽¹⁾ which tells the story of Saint Luke, as a tribute to the Master, Prof. Dr. José Fernandes Pontes, who died 11 years ago, and whose memory remains long revered, possibly for perpetuity.

A simple human figure without vanity, always elegantly presented in a white cotton monogram med shirt impeccably married with an ever-present tie and over this, a white overall and a simple office pen. He remained compulsively watchful in his daily writing about his ideas, philosophical and psychoanalytic techniques, occupying all the free spaces between the lines and edges of the pages with his clinical observations. He never drove a car, rather being driven by his driver or his wife, returning to his home or riding along with one of his attending physicians, always late at night, sometimes reading a scientific paper or discussing some topic of medical interest. In his comfortable residence, soberly decorated, he shared space with Ms. Lelia, his wife, in its library of more than 5000 volumes, including important works on which he based his humanistic and medical training. Very often, his students and assistants were invited to participate in sessions of analysis and the study of a range of themes on a Sunday morning, before or after his visit to the in-patients at Instituto de Gastroenterologia de São Paulo (IGESP), an institution that he coordinated and over which he presided.

There was no space in Prof. Pontes’ life for subjects that did not relate to medicine or its effects on the clinical and affective status of his patients. His ritual of care followed an almost religious discipline: a warm, serene, receptive, and welcoming posture, without concern for the length of time taken for his queries or visits to the infirmary. Promoter of the “spontaneous report” and the “free association of ideas,” he allowed patients to speak freely about their general complaints, physical and emotional discomforts, conflicts and psychosomatic status. This was the secret of his professional success and the key to a more dynamic and comprehensive

diagnosis, even before the advent of new technologies and therapies. His teachings were based on global attention to the patient and his family, and within this complex interaction, he regarded disease as a single cell with particular needs; thus, he reflected the performance of a medical professional integrator, as characterized by his profile.

Prof. Pontes built the fundamentals of Gastroenterology as we see it today. He founded the referral service for the field at the Hospital das Clínicas of the University of São Paulo. A tireless researcher and stimulator for the formation of new professionals with humanistic characteristics, he founded an institution unique in Brazil, the Brazilian Institute of Studies and Research in Gastroenterology (IBEPEGE), which employed more than 300 experts and developed over 120 relevant scientific theses, spreading ideas throughout Brazil and the world. Involving the largest system of the human body, Gastroenterology is the largest medical specialty, subdivided into several areas of practice. Prof. Pontes encouraged, participated in, and sponsored the foundation of several specialty societies, most notably the Brazilian Association of Psychosomatic Medicine, of which he was one of the first Presidents. This Association brought him recognition and universal respect, and remains fully active, serving health professionals. The Professor also sponsored clinical and scientific activity in the IBEPEGE and the foundation of the Brazilian Society of Digestive Motility.

His traditional scientific clinical meetings, held at the IBEPEGE on Tuesdays, were famously stimulating events, attracting gentlemen from a range of institutions in São Paulo. These offered an independent forum, where they could absorb the teachings of the Grand Master, with warm discussions of topics and clinical and scientific observations in the light of an integrated approach to every individual in the biopsychosocial sphere. The large audience always showed great interest, actively participating and occupying all available spaces.

Prof. Pontes was prolific in the production of texts, writing untold



Prof. Pontes with his last assistants: Dr. Davida Mone, Dr. José Alves de Freitas and Dr. Fernando Pardini. 1995.

numbers of chapters of books and co-authoring several scientific papers, but his text book on Gastroenterology was never finished, as it remained concerned with ideas around the actuality of knowledge; these ideas were repeatedly interrupted, seduced by new ideas, ultimately producing a fantastic puzzle, in which each new contribution fitted in with innovative medical science. The Professor was awarded the honorary title of Member of the National Academy of Medicine as an invited member.

Fifty-four years ago, Prof. Pontes produced another great work of his life as a scientist: the periodical **Archives of Gastroenterology**, as a means of disseminating and encouraging Brazilian scientific publication. This periodical continues to be of incontestable importance in terms of publications reflecting Brazilian science, mainly in the field of Gastroenterology. Since its inception, the periodical has remained completely open and ecumenical, publishing and disseminating scientific work without any bias or political connotation, favoring no particular academic society. The periodical attends to all that is involved in its editorial dynamics, all the while remaining fully integrated into the main specialty societies, earning it official recognition as a vehicle of scientific publication. The financial costs are fully

absorbed by the IBEPEGE and its current main sponsor, the Takeda Laboratory, both committed to the disclosure and distribution functions of its publication in print for more than 7000 readers, free of charge, in addition to maintaining an open access philosophy on Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO)⁽³⁾.

The quality of this periodical is well-known, and it is of increasing interest to authors from other countries. A great future is anticipated for the **Archives**, meeting the needs of non-commodification of medical knowledge and free access to information.

There is no denying the importance of Prof. José Fernandes Pontes as a thinker, scientist, and propagator of the establishment and development of Brazilian Gastroenterology on the international stage. His memory should continually be revived and celebrated. One of his major scientific achievements, the **Archives of Gastroenterology**, has left a worthy legacy for future generations. Through the recognition of the historical significance of our origins, we can recognize and appreciate that the publication of basic teachings on ethics, science, and research remains the basis for the practice of Medical Ethics, communalizing and humanizing medicine.

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