

### ***In Memoriam* of José DAVID-FERREIRA.**

Professor José David-Ferreira marked several generations of physicians and biomedical researchers. As a lecturer of Cell Biology in the first year of the medical degree, which for many years was dominated by traditional and uninspiring disciplines, his lectures literally represented a light at the end of the tunnel for the more displeased students. He encouraged interaction in his classes and he amazed everyone with his little cards which contained the precious information that was discussed in his interactive classes with some many questions, many of them never answered, neither by students nor by him. But they were seething in the minds of the more imaginative students. He surprised his students and assistants with unexpected appearances in the practical classes, not to check on students but to stir the air and stimulated hidden energies. Professor David-Ferreira managed to match the high point of teaching cell biology with a remarkable organization that he called “mini congress”. It was remarkable because it emotionally involved students and assistants in a truly unprecedented joint effort and revolutionary at the time: to dissect a scientific paper, produce a written summary of contents, a poster with detailed description, and a ten minute oral presentation focusing on the core features of the article. The high commitment he got from students and, no less important, from assistants created a healthy competition among all classes, which were motivated to produce the best poster, the clearest abstract, and the presentation with the highest impact. However, Professor David-Ferreira had another goal in this initiative. With his wit and experience, he sensed in some students the necessary restless spirit, nonconformity, and perseverance to change the way teaching was conducted, as monitors, and in research, as trainees at the Gulbenkian Institute of Science. These traineeships were very demanding and helped separate the wheat from the chaff. Those who showed dedication and capacities would certainly have new opportunities, always serious and demanding.

Professor David-Ferreira was also responsible for the teaching of Histology and Embryology, which was a much more descriptive subject, seemingly with less room for creativity, when compared with Cell Biology. Perhaps this is why his personal imprint on the organization of the course was even more remarkable, encouraging the presence of lecturers with very charismatic styles in the theoretical classes, which made one forget the expository component of the subject.

Unique moments were experienced at some of the Embryology classes, where the chalk boards were transformed into living books of the evolution of human tissues, The practical classes, always based on normal and not pathological histological slides, were, paradoxically, extraordinary opportunities to organize the clinical spirit. It allowed us to observe, catalogue and interpret facts, and then correctly identify tissues and organs, like later on medical students would need to do to get the right diagnosis.

The Gulbenkian Institute of Science, to whose creation he was associated, and particularly the Laboratory of Cell Biology, which he directed, was a beacon in the scientific panorama and biomedical research in Portugal. The atmosphere of quality, rigour and demand had no parallel in this country for many years. Several generations of young doctors, biologists and veterinarians found, in the Cell Biology Institute of the Gulbenkian Institute of Science, a golden opportunity for their professional development. It was here that they attained the basic objectives of an academic and scientific career in a physical and intellectual microclimate that allowed them to publish articles in international scientific journals and have the minimum conditions to defend their PhD theses. Everyone was indelibly marked by this experience and by the tutelary presence of Professor David-Ferreira.

Professor David-Ferreira always had a very full life, investing his time in the development of groups he was part of and in the institutions he worked for. Examples include the development of the Portuguese Society of Electron Microscopy and Cell Biology, his commitment to several managing sectors of the Faculty of Medicine and later of the University itself, always acting without neglecting his major works and the development of the people who worked with him. Interestingly, the most enduring memories of many who were close to him were the simple things in life that he fostered: the informal lifts he gave students to take them from the Faculty to the Gulbenkian Institute of Science, the habit of the group lunch at the Gulbenkian Institute of Science, the tour that followed at the gardens of the institution, and the 5 o'clock tea with the group.

I met Professor David-Ferreira in 1986, in the first year of my medical degree at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Lisbon. I am still surprised at how important his invitation to undertake the first summer internship at the Gulbenkian Institute of Science was for my future career. There were several more throughout the degree, and later he invited me to work with him in the teaching of histology. I pursued a clinical career, which he both respected and encouraged. Despite some natural professional distancing, I remember with emotion his childlike joy for each of my professional successes. This was his nature. To encourage and train the younger, and give them the wings to later seek new development opportunities and contribute towards the construction of science in Portuguese, to whose pillars Professor David-Ferreira contributed immensely. His example will endure in the actions of those he trained and in the extraordinary performance of Portuguese Medicine and Biomedical Science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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