

Opening Speech of the 2026 Presidency of the Argentine Society of Cardiology

Discurso inaugural de la presidencia de la Sociedad Argentina de Cardiología 2026

Distinguished members of the Argentine Society of Cardiology, colleagues, friends, and families:

It is a great honor to address you as the future president of this institution, which has been a beacon in the scientific development of cardiovascular medicine since its founding. I consider it a great privilege to receive the recognition of my colleagues, which is not only a source of pride but also a wonderful challenge that I will undertake with responsibility, fairness, and respect for others.

To chart the path forward, we must look back to our profession's origins and the giants on whose shoulders it was built. Our history is inextricably linked to Professor Bernardo Houssay, a visionary leader whose influence extended beyond his specialty. In addition to promoting experimental science in Argentina and establishing CONICET (National Council for Scientific and Technical Research) he was a catalyst for excellence. He left us with an unshakeable creed: "Science is not expensive; ignorance is expensive." That scientific and rigorous spirit found its highest expression on April 9, 1937, with the establishment of this illustrious Society. The founders not only created an entity, but also established a pact of commitment to teaching, research, and the professionalization of cardiologists.

Our mission is to generate and disseminate scientific knowledge through research, continuing education, and specialized training. We promote medicine based on humanistic values and ethical principles to optimize health outcomes, manage resources efficiently, and ensure equitable access to cardiovascular care for patients.

In these new times, leading means navigating complexity. It's not just about hierarchy; it is also about influence, empathy, active listening, and vision. We are here to serve, not to be served. We need to continue building leadership anchored in the one thing that defines us: virtue.

I have heard the phrase "politically correct" for a long time. Personally, I would add another question: "Is it humanly correct?" On this point, I would argue that if something is humanly incorrect, it cannot be sustained just because it is politically correct; the

end does not always justify the means. I emphasize the importance of searching for the truth, and being authentic and consistent. It is essential to align what I think, what I say, and what I do. In his book "The Oblivion That We Will Be", writer Héctor Abad Faciolince describes the importance of being authentic and not a hybrid between a horse and a cow, which neither trots nor gives milk. I believe cooperation is a more revolutionary strategy than competition in our Society setting. Self-improvement is useless if it is not used to help others.

The recently designed Strategic Plan is a general framework based on consensus that allows decisions to be made in a coherent and consistent manner to achieve the set objectives. To be sustainable, these guidelines must meet equity and accessibility criteria. As a leader, it is important to determine what and when, not how, as we have carefully selected the individuals responsible for this.

Ours is a time of fascinating and challenging crossroads. We are not facing a period of change; rather, we are experiencing a change of era. Cardiology has evolved exponentially. We now use technologies that would have been considered science fiction just a decade ago, ranging from artificial intelligence that analyzes risk patterns to the most sophisticated imaging techniques. However, amid this whirlwind of progress, we risk dehumanizing care by replacing attentive listening with perfect algorithms. The Humanics model, developed by Joseph E. Aoun, delves deeper into this aspect of the teaching-learning process. In today's technological world, technology will continue to be indispensable, data must be transformed into a language that can be decoded, the human dimension must be prepared to meet the challenge of serving as the balancing point where judgment, empathy, and ethics allow technology and data to be oriented toward the greater good. There will be no better organizations without better human beings.

To achieve greater coordination and integration between all its areas and district councils, the Society has redesigned its structure. To this end, it has established three pillars of action: Education, Research, and the SAC Membership Area.



Future education will be one that raises more questions rather than merely accumulating content. We must educate not only brilliant technicians, but also prudent and ethical doctors. The challenge is profoundly human. Following this path, the Teaching Area will continue to focus its efforts on creating the University Education Institute. Additionally, we will fulfill the longstanding desire of residents in districts offering the SAC Postgraduate Cardiology Course to obtain the specialty certificate from our society, with university endorsement. Similarly, it is time to update the Consensus on Cardiology Education. We will achieve this goal with the help of the advisory faculty, which has done significant work this year in defining the profile of the cardiologist and the teaching course for educators.

The Research Area will continue to develop a national network of researchers and proceed with two new registries related to cardiomyopathies and valvular heart disease within the framework of the European Society of Cardiology registries. Efforts will be made to increase the production of studies addressing the epidemiological reality in Argentina and the specific needs of our population. Additionally, the regulations governing research projects have been updated to ensure pluralism in data usage and publication participation, both of which are supervised by the society.

The quality of the new consensus statements to be developed in 2026 will be enhanced by integrating the GRADE methodology progressively and adapting the recommendations to the reality of medicine in Argentina. Additionally, new leaders will be promoted to develop the various guidelines, leveraging the experience of previous leaders as advisors.

Leadership should honor members' careers. The SAC's values must be reflected in every process, from admitting new members to electing authorities in different areas. The Area of Professional Career Development for Members, organized in 2025, will initiate its activities. The aim is to define the career training of our cardiologists by improving their managerial knowledge, leadership skills, research abilities, and teaching and advocacy skills.

We will expand implementation of the strategic plan to define work processes in the administrative, accounting, and IT areas. We will invest in staff training, task definition, workplace improvement and integration, and IT system updates and synchronization.

Another planned action is organizing a fundraising campaign to enhance the value of the Society's auditorium. We will complete the process of creating the SAC museum, which reflects our origins and history.

Our actions will focus on promoting the implementation of the "Networks that Save Lives" program, whose purpose is to guide and support cities, municipalities, and regions in Argentina in the design and implementation of local or regional acute myocardial infarction care networks, based on the recommenda-

tions of clinical practice guidelines and adapted to their local resources and capabilities.

The federalization of the Argentine Society of Cardiology is a growing reality that must integrate opportunities with meritocracy. In 2025, SAC Country professionals organized congresses, and by 2026, this objective will be consolidated by incorporating spaces for the participation of SAC districts in the hierarchical area of the scientific committee. The Congress on Cardiometabolism, the Digital Health Meetup, the Conference on Geriatric Cardiology, Cardiology Day, and the Argentine-Paraguayan Conference will be held in different districts within SAC Country.

The International Relations Area will continue to consolidate following the incorporation of former presidents and young leaders. The goal will be to strengthen the action plan, build on the contacts established in previous administrations, and maintain continuity. Along with our extensive list of international connections, including the ESC, AHA, ACC, South American Society, SIAC, and Latin American societies, our international activities will include the LATAM ESC 2026 Conference, an agreement with the IAS (International Atherosclerosis Society), and the initiation of collaborative efforts with the Asian Heart Society and the Chinese Cardiovascular Association.

The Argentine Society of Cardiology and the Argentine Cardiology Foundation should collaborate in a coordinated manner within their respective areas of expertise. We must abandon our past fears and embrace disruption in pursuit of higher goals. The Society will ensure that this new modality of integration is developed with respect and magnanimity. We will unify the identification logo with a new concept of the "brand manual." The Cardiovascular Congress for patients will be held within the framework of the Argentine Congress of Cardiology. Similarly, the book for patients is currently in the writing stage.

The districts are the SAC in every corner of the country. Their presidents are leaders who must make an impact in their areas of influence by organizing local and regional scientific activities, interacting with community members through health prevention and promotion initiatives, and advocating at the political and media levels.

Together with the SAC Women's Area, we will continue to work toward enacting the national law that declares October 9th "Women's Cardiovascular Disease Awareness Day." This date has already been established by law in several Argentine provinces. In 2026, we will promote the Liliana Grinfeld Award for the best work on cardiovascular disease in women.

The Argentine Society of Cardiology will work to serve as a consultative body in the enactment of the Nicolás Law, which aims to ensure the right to quality, safe healthcare focused on individuals and communities.

Measure to improve will be the project to bring our leaders together to define the quality metrics that

should be assessed in various areas of cardiology, establishing a benchmark for evaluation.

The editors have done an outstanding job of adapting the Argentine Journal of Cardiology to meet the new requirements for PubMed indexing. The formal presentation will be made next year, and we remain hopeful that we will achieve this goal.

I invite young people not to become discouraged, but to believe that a prosperous future is possible if they work hard for it. The SAC has done an excellent job of promoting its members in teaching, research, and districts. I am confident in saying that the future of Argentine cardiology is secure. We need stronger institutions to guarantee a development project focused not only on care, but also on professional growth. We sometimes ask ourselves what kind of healthcare system we will leave for our future residents. This question usually refers to a much broader and more complex framework of action and responsibility. Therefore, in the meantime, let us continue working on the quality of new cardiologists we will leave to the country.

The Sonqo activity, with the high-altitude indigenous communities, will continue with a new edition in 2026. For this new edition, we will incorporate scientific research in the field in collaboration with a prestigious international scientific society, and we will be presenting the project at the World Heart Federation in the Most Creative Campaign category.

As the aphorism goes, "The physician who knows only medicine, knows not even medicine." Beyond scientific knowledge, excellent physicians integrate empathy, communication skills, a holistic perspective, continuous learning, adaptability, ethics, and the humanities into their professional practice. In this sense, activities will be carried out with the aim of cultivating other aspects of knowledge, such as history, spirituality, the arts, leadership, and narrative medicine.

In recent years, new psychosocial risk factors have been identified, as well as others linked to the environment and pollution. Likewise, new disciplines such as genetics and artificial intelligence have emerged, offering contributions, promise, paradigm shifts, and new fears. The Argentine Society of Cardiology has recognized the changing times by establishing the Councils on Psychosocial Aspects, Digital Health, Genetic Cardiology, Cardioecology, and Healthy Habits in recent years. In this context of change, the SAC has contributed with vision, understanding, agility, and clarity of thought. Following this line of thinking, we will establish inter-council working groups to address specific conditions. We will begin with structural heart disease, an area in which clinical cardiology, imaging, cardiovascular surgery, and interventional cardiology can collaborate. We want interventional subspecialties to find a place in the SAC framework for developing their activities once again. This requires a shared vision of the future that transcends

personal interests.

The success and significance of the SAC in the coming decades will depend not only on our technical skills, but also on our human excellence and the virtuous leadership we are capable of embodying. We must reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the patient, the true driving force and meaning of our profession. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "tempus breve est," referring to the brevity of our time on earth. These words resonate deeply in our hearts, serving as a reproach for our lack of generosity and as a constant invitation to demonstrate loyalty. Wisdom and compassion are inextricably linked. Jorge Luis Borges meditated on time, the raw material of our professional existence: "Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire." This Borgesian reflection, which places us as the active substance of time, is fundamental in medicine. We are, in fact, our patients' time. Our leadership and expertise define the quality of their future days. It is our duty to ensure that this time is dignified and supported by the best science.

In the 21st century, leadership in cardiology requires vision, heart, and character. We call on the SAC community to embrace this virtuous leadership and ensure that patients are not only the recipients of our work but also witnesses to our human and professional excellence.

I would like to express my gratitude by mentioning a few people, as I am afraid of omitting someone, and it would take too long to name everyone. Goals are achieved through personal effort and the generosity of many people and/or institutions, whether apparent or tacit. First, I would like to thank my parents, who taught me the value of honesty, simplicity, and doing a good job. I fondly remember the Lasallian community of San Martín and the Murialdine community of Villa Bosch. I am grateful to the University of Buenos Aires and the Hospital de Clínicas, where I had the unique opportunity to begin my training. I am also grateful to the teachers and fellow residents at Sanatorio Mitre, where I learned not only about cardiology, but also about taking a broad view of medicine, which included the importance of transformative leadership, high-quality training, and teamwork. Later, my time at CONAREC (Argentine Council of Cardiology Residents) broadened my perspective to include the entire country, allowing me to participate in the first national registry of coronary angioplasty. I also recall the SAC Research Area, where we learnt statistics, database development, and analysis. I am eternally grateful to the SAC for the opportunity to interact in multiple areas and grow alongside its great leaders since I started the UBA-SAC course in 1994.

The 2001 crisis was another uncertain time, and the idea of staying or emigrating became more pressing every day. At that time, my wife's timely advice

prompted me to reach out to Austral University Hospital. There, a new, transformative stage of my life began. When I arrived, there was much to be done. The department of cardiology welcomed me generously and affectionately, allowing me to integrate easily and encouraging initiatives that benefited the group. I am very proud and grateful to be part of such a generous team of excellent individuals who have helped me grow professionally, personally, and spiritually. I am deeply grateful to my patients, some of whom are here today, for giving me the chance to accompany them on their journeys.

At the institutional level, it was a pleasure working with Dr. Pablo Stutzbach to combine our strengths. I am grateful to you for allowing me to accompany you and share in your achievements in an atmosphere of camaraderie, respect, and generosity. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Mirta Diez, Dr. Ricardo León de la Fuente, the Board of Directors, and the leaders of the Society.

Finally, I would like to thank my family: my wife,

Laura, and my four children, Ignacio, Santiago, Pablo, and Sofía. They have experienced having a father divided between two loves, and they have given me understanding and support as I walked this path. I am grateful to my wife for her unconditional support, the breakfasts she made me every morning, and the advice she gave me that helped me improve my interpersonal relationships: “Language is neither innocent nor neutral.” It has helped me learn to listen and to be more thoughtful in my choice of words. I do not think I have fully mastered this, but I have improved somewhat.

At the end of the day, we return to poetry, to the essence of what we do. If time is the substance of which we are made, as Borges said, then the time we devote to family, teaching, research, and patient care must be our masterpiece. “Dream, and you will fall short.”

Sergio Baratta ^{MTSAC}

President of the Argentine Society of Cardiology