



Dr. Horacio Mario Zylbersztein

*“A hard slap, a frozen blow,
an invisible and murderous stroke of the axe,
a brutal shove has brought you down”*

**Fragment of Elegy
by Miguel Hernández**

To a friend

Dear friend and brother Horacio:

I never thought and would never have wanted to write this tribute because of your early departure, even more when everything evolved so rapidly that you and we, those who love you, found it much more difficult to psychically prepare for it. It is hard to believe that only six months ago you and your beloved Noga were at my house, celebrating my 60th birthday, drinking, eating and even dancing musical hits of the 60s and 70s as adolescents. You looked so well, full of life and happiness...! And now, it seems a distant remembrance, yet so fresh in my memory!

I met you in the beginning of 1990. We were both taking our first steps in cardiology. We started together in the coronary care unit created by another great cardiologist and master, Prof. Dr. Mario Fortunato, the chief of the unit. Both of us and Dr. Patricia Soria (who is currently the Chief of the Department of Cardiology of Hospital Pirovano) ran the coronary care unit, and each of us was in charge of one of its three sectors. By that time, you were a tall and thin blond guy that got very nervous when you were on duty and smoked heavily (some years later, you would become a fervent fighter against tobacco).

Immediately, we began to get along, sharing many things: music, politics, and our love for the family and for our children. We were only divided by soccer: you were an inveterate gallina and I was a fervent bostero (to make things worse, during those years River got tired of winning championships and

we only cheered up when we won the classic game). And, in this way, we shared family parties, birthdays, countless nights out and some holidays. I still recall the picture in which we were embracing each other, holding the diploma of the Superior Course of Cardiology in that distant year of 1992. Years went by, and our bond strengthened so much that you introduced me as your “brother of life” and became the father of Tamara and I the father of Ignacio. Then, your two other children came along: Matías and Gabriel.

In those years, the coordinator of the Coronary Care Unit was Mario Ciruzzi, another great cardiologist, epidemiologist, master and pioneer in cardiovascular prevention. He was your mentor. Marito Ciruzzi insisted us to attend the SAC Councils and to participate in the society. You were the one that best followed his footsteps and, in this way, you grew up: travelling around the country or neighboring countries, representing the SAC with your presence. During those years, you engendered your other non-biological and beloved “son”: the Tamara Study (named after your daughter), another child you were very proud of. Then, you developed the Tamara 2 Study. You were currently working on a study comparing both Tamara studies (it would be very interesting if someone takes the initiative and publishes this study as a tribute to you). At Hospital Pirovano, you became chief of Unit 5 (cardiology ward), and this was your current position. In the SAC you were President of the Council of Epidemiology and Member of the Scientific Committee. Paradoxically, and as a cruel twist of fate, both you and Mario Ciruzzi occupied the same positions at hospital and in the SAC, and both of you departed before giving, in the most generous sense, all the knowledge you had to offer Argentine cardiology. Apart from being an excellent father, a great cardiologist and a restless worker (I

still see you behind your computer, working on a new project), you were also a man of great courage. When you lost your right eye as a consequence of the onset of the disease that would make you leave, you did not feel sorry for yourself, and a month later you were fixing your car and driving 400 km to Mar de las Pampas, where we shared unforgettable days together. With the same courage, you faced your final disease. On Saturday, July 16, I called you up and asked you if you would like to meet me. You said you would love to, and gave me that privilege. I went to meet you feeling a profound grief. There, we had our last prolonged conversation, and you told me you knew your time was up, but you were "in peace" with those you loved and with your work, because you had attained everything you wanted to do. I went home consoled with your words: my friend was leaving in peace and this privilege rarely occurs at the end of a man's life.

You chose to spend your last five days in "your"

Hospital Pirovano, which was also your home, where you felt pampered, protected and cared by your fellow physicians and nurses. On July 22, at midday, I saw you alive for the last time, very weak; you did not want to talk. You only held my hand tightly, and when I was leaving, I gave you a kiss and you, as the best *idishe mame*, said to me: Oscar, wrap up warm, it's cold and you are bare chested. He was the sick and he was looking after me!

This is the way Horacio was. I left with the fear and certainty that that was the last time I would listen to you, and so it was. That afternoon, when I returned from the office, a colleague called me up and told me you were dying. I had time to give you a kiss, and as I find it difficult to say goodbye, I only tell you: So long, Horacio!

Dr. Oscar Lorenzo Martínez

Cardiologist. Hospital Pirovano
Buenos Aires, August 9, 2016

To my friend Horacio

I refuse to write an obituary note about Horacio Zylbersztejn, whose surprising departure left me with no answers.

For many years, and since the summons of another great one as Dr. Mario Ciruzzi, we were part of the SAC, sharing works in the Research Area, which also spread to the field of the public hospital to which we belong.

I remember our first course on Research Methodology in the SAC, where the study of Smoking in physicians started, a topic he developed until his last days.

His career, renowned in the professional field, was widely disseminated through the publication of his works and his participation in the Council of Epi-

demiology and Vascular Prevention, as well as in the Research Area, both of which he directed with great professional ability.

His production enriched the SAC and his person largely transcended it.

Let these few lines serve as institutional and professional acknowledgement for the enthusiastic researcher, great colleague and friend.

I am grateful to the Editorial Board of the Argentine Society of Cardiology for allowing me to express my sincere testimony.

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