

In memoriam Alfredo Marqués Gubern

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Ex-President SECP

Dr. Alfredo Marqués Gubern passed away in July. Perhaps the younger generations don't know who he really was, since he'd been retired for almost two decades, and each new generation has a tendency to disregard previous generations and believe it is brighter and more prepared than they were. We hardly ever take into account the fact our vision of the world is clearer because we're standing on the shoulders of the generation that preceded us. Alfredo had on his shoulders a multitude of residents who learned everything with him. He was our Head of Studies, and I believe that given his work and dedication, he should be considered one of the fundamental pillars of our specialty in the 20th century.

Dr. Alfredo Marqués Gubern was born on June 27, 1932 in Barcelona, which he never wanted to leave even though he had the skills, opportunities, and ability to be an extraordinary head of department in any city. He undertook his specialty under the guidance of his uncle Luis Gubern Salisachs, who led one of the two Pediatric Surgery schools in Barcelona at the time, training at the *Hospital de Nens* and at the Corachán Clinic where he would work all his life. When *Vall de Hebrón* Pediatric Hospital was founded in 1966, he joined that exciting project under the direction of Boix-Ochoa until he retired in 2002. He was a comprehensive surgeon. He worked in pediatric traumatology. He then practiced at *Vall de Hebrón* where he worked in the neonatal, urology, and digestive surgery departments, and where he set up a myelomeningocele consultation. This was the seed for the Spina Bifida Association, which works toward the best treatment of this malformation and the best approach to it.

Rather than talking about his hundreds of papers and publications, which are readily available, it is worth taking a look at four aspects of his life – as a person, as a professional, as a trainer, and as a friend.



Alfredo Marqués Gubern. (Courtesy of Anna Marqués).

As a **person**, he was funny, entertaining, and a big fan of pop music. I don't know if he was truly a fan or if it was because he wanted to be closer to the residents and the passions of young people. He rode motocross and set up a group of mountain bikers that eventually merged with other groups to form the "*Moto Verdes*." On weekends, riding his motorcycle was his outlet. Alfredo had accumulated his vast scientific knowledge without ever ceasing to be young.

As a **professional**, he was tireless and one of the people who worked the hardest for Pediatric Surgery and for our Society (SECP). From 1985 to 1988, he was SECP Secretary, and from 1988 to 1991, he served on the Board as Editorial Secretary of the *Cirugía Pediátrica* Journal, our Journal, which he founded through great effort. He managed to publish the first issue in January 1988 and ensured its continuity in spite of how difficult it was to find new

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manuscripts in those early days. Thanks to his efforts and to those of all subsequent editorial secretaries, the Journal is still published today, benefiting from a well-earned prestige. From 1992 to 1996, he was SECP President. He was very proud to be the first SECP President who was not a head of department, a clear indicator that his prestige was truly personal in nature and not linked to any position. Iñaki Eizaguirre, as Secretary, Emilio Blesa as Editorial Secretary, and myself as Treasurer accompanied him on this board. We were able to see first-hand the enormous efforts he made to strengthen the specialty more and more with regard to the Administration. He convened the first chief-of-department meeting to consolidate criteria and discuss the problems of each department in order to improve training expectations and operation of our specialty.

In a 2013 editorial⁽¹⁾, he provided a brief review of the history of the SECP and the Journal, which is worth re-reading to see the progress our Society has made and his considerable personal contributions. He authored 2 books on the history of our Society where all the relevant data is included. The first book, *Historia de la sección de Cirugía Pediátrica Española 1962-1983* (“history of Spanish Pediatric Surgery 1962-1983”) was published in 1984 at the request of the board of which he was secretary, and which was chaired by Ruiz Company with Jaime Mulet as treasurer. The second book, *Sociedad Española de Cirugía Pediátrica 1984-1998* (“Spanish Pediatric Surgery Society 1984-1998”), would see the light in 1999, with Luis Morales as president. He left behind the outline of a third book, which was never published.

As a **trainer**, he taught us to approach pediatric surgery from 4 angles: study, scientific rigor, self-demand, and

meticulousness. Later, once we had become “mature residents,” he gave us two wings with which to fly – freedom and confidence. His sessions were always a time saver and a source of quality for us. It was wonderful to help him or just watch him operate. It was a pleasure to observe his exquisite care with hemostasis, his perfect, safe, and rapid dissections, and the creation of operating fields so well laid out that at times they made the presence of an assistant almost useless. Someone said of him that it was as if he were creating a ballet with his hands.

If the definition of a **friend** is a person who makes you better, he was truly a friend to all of us who were his pupils. So much so that when residents had any problem, even a personal one, they consulted him because of his good judgment. And in the face of discouragement, he used to comment “*I have a friend who says we’ve come to this world to go on summer vacation,*” so that we would take any setbacks with a sense of reflection, optimism, and encouragement. It’s possible that he, who was born and died in the summer, came to this world as if he were going on a permanent summer vacation, because if you work at something you enjoy, it feels as if you weren’t working at all. For Alfredo, Pediatric Surgery was his life and his pleasure, so he probably didn’t feel like he had worked a single day, but rather enjoyed a permanent summer that will now continue elsewhere, leaving us here to endure a somber fall.

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

- 1 Marqués Gubern A. 50 años de la Sociedad y 25 de la Revista. *Cir Pediatr.* 2013; 26: 105.