

In memoriam: Santiago Ruiz Company

C. García-Sala Viguer

Former President of the SECP.



This photo is dated April 13, 2022, at 85 years of age.

Dr. Santiago Ruiz Company, one of the pioneers of Pediatric Surgery in Spain, passed away on July 5.

I concur with Dr. Elías Pollina's statement, "*perhaps the younger generations don't know who he is, since he had been retired for almost two decades, each new generation has a tendency to ignore the previous ones, and we think we are smarter and more prepared than those who came before*

us. However, we are not aware that if we make continued progress, it is because we stand on the shoulders of the generation that preceded us."

Born on April 13, 1937, in Seville, he was the eldest of 5 siblings. His father was Juan Antonio Ruiz Santamaría, a military doctor during the Spanish Civil War and a well-known pediatrician in Valencia. His mother was Isabel Company Buada.

Soon after, the whole family moved to Valencia, where he attended high school at the Colegio de Jesuitas and studied Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Valencia.

During the summers, he used to complete internships at various German hospitals alongside Dr. Boix Ochoa.

In 1962, he finished his degree and became a resident intern at the O'Donnell Maternity Hospital (Madrid), in Dr. Julio Monereo's Pediatric Surgery Department. It was there

that he met his wife, María Teresa Llovet Moreno-Elorza, who was Dr. Monereo's instrument nurse. They got married in June 1965.

He obtained a position by competitive examination as a State Pediatrician in Segorbe, from which he subsequently resigned to pursue his vocation as a Pediatric Surgeon.

In July 1965, La Paz Pediatric Hospital was inaugurated, and the Head of the Pediatric Surgery Department was Dr. Julio Monereo, who brought Santiago as an assistant to his team.

In 1971, La Fe Pediatric Hospital was inaugurated in Valencia, and Santiago was appointed Head of the Pediatric Surgery Department.

In 1976, he organized and was president of the first Spanish-Italian Symposium, and in 1977, he held the first Symposium on Neonatal Surgery.

He was the president of the Spanish Society of Pediatric Surgery (1985-1988).

In 1990, he obtained a Doctorate in Medicine by presenting his doctoral thesis, entitled: *Gammagrafía pulmonar (con Tc-99m) en la evaluación postoperatoria de neonatos con hernia de Bochdalek [Pulmonary Scintigraphy (with Tc-99m) in the Postoperative Evaluation of Neonates with Bochdalek's Hernia]*; supervised by Professor Colomer Sala.

Together with Doctors Marques Gubern and Mulet Ferragut, he published *Historia de la Sección de Cirugía Pediátrica Española (1962-1983) [History of Spanish Pediatric Surgery (1962-1983)]*, and thanks to them, we have a beautiful and clear summary of our specialty, which every pediatric surgeon should know about.

He authored countless papers and publications throughout his professional career, and he retired in 2003.

Particularly noteworthy were the care and gentleness with which each child was treated, the meticulousness with which each child's medical history was collected, and the conscientious clinical examination in search of signs to determine the most appropriate surgical strategy.

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According to Dr. Alba's statement, with which I agree entirely, Santiago had many qualities. Still, the most characteristic was his ability to search, collect and file quickly and orderly a large amount of perfectly cataloged scientific information (bibliographic citations, offprints, etc.), which could be consulted effortlessly. Similarly, he was eager to collect the most significant amounts of iconography (operative images, physical features, and radiological findings) with which he could later support his lectures – he owned one of the best collections of slides.

He also instilled in us that a good surgeon should not only know the relevant surgical technique perfectly, but also be able to adapt it to each patient. If he had to improvise, he should do so not just in any way but rather according to the most beneficial results for the child.

He passed all this on to us, leaving us a great legacy, which was none other than the affection and respect he had for children.

Santiago was tremendously observant, and one of his greatest virtues was that he helped everyone to excel in the profession. He offered his support to teach us how to publish and present, and he was always willing to assist and teach us the art of Pediatric Surgery.

Outside the world of Surgery, he had many hobbies. He was a Nativity Scene maker and a great philatelist – he received many awards for his varied collections. He obtained four gold medals for his philatelic collection on Medicine and another for his collection on Nobel Prizes in Medicine.

He was also passionate about education, and after retirement, he studied History for four years at the Universidad Sénior de Valencia.

Another great passion of his was his family. He had six children: Isabel, María Teresa, Santiago, Juan Antonio, Arturo, and Rosa; and 16 grandchildren: Juan Antonio, David, Marta, Carlos, María, Álvaro, Rosa, Alejandra, Eugenia, Daniel, Teresa, Amparo, Pepe, Santiago, Mateo, and Leo.

He was also a great friend of his friends, with whom he had a very close relationship. His great humility and humanity are to be highlighted.

Santiago was a leader, a colleague, and a friend. We have been left orphaned of his never-ending wise counsel.

REFERENCES

Information provided by María Teresa and from Dr. Alba's talk at Santiago's retirement event.