

## *In memoriam* Professor Enrique Egaña, MD (1912-1997)<sup>1</sup>

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Picture of Prof Enrique Egaña, taken on June 16, 1971.

*Enrique Egaña-Barahona. Born Santiago, Chile, 10 March 1912. Deceased Santiago, Chile, 23 November 1997. MD, University of Chile, 1936. Rockefeller Foundation Fellow at Harvard University Medical School, 1940-1944. Professor of Pathophysiology, 1963; Director, Institute of Experimental Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Chile. Author of a Textbook on General Pathophysiology (1963) and of many scientific articles in Chilean and American medical journals. Strong supporter of evidence-based medicine as well as of medical education by involving students in short research projects.*

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The University of Chile School of Medicine mourns the disappearance of one of its more prominent academicians, Professor Enrique Egaña-Barahona. He passed away on November 23rd, 1997, after superbly contributing with thoughtfulness and reliability to the

academic work of the institution for far more than fifty years. His initiatives and actions were so vast that they embraced the entire spectrum of academic activities.

Enrique Egaña was born on March 10th, 1912, in Santiago, Chile. He did his primary and high school studies at the

<sup>1</sup> Based on the speech delivered by Eduardo Rosselot, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Chile, at Professor Egaña's funeral at the Catholic Cemetery, Santiago, November 24th, 1997.

"*Liceo Alemán*" (German Lyceum) of Santiago. He then studied Medicine at the University of Chile and obtained his MD in 1936, graduating with the highest honors.

Professor Egaña started his academic career in 1930 as an assistant in Chemistry to Professor Guillermo García-Latorre at this School of Medicine and continued his commitment to the university for the next 67 years. Also, he worked at the Catholic University of Chile School of Medicine from 1933 to 1937, as an assistant in Physiology to Professor Héctor Croxatto.

In 1939 he began working in Experimental Medicine with Professors Ernesto Prado-Tagle and Alexander Lipschütz. However, his most formative academic experience was obtained at Harvard University through a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship from 1940 to 1944. Since then, he established a permanent association with Harvard, becoming Visiting Professor in Neuropathophysiology and Neurochemistry (1975) and Honorary Member of the School of Medicine's Dean Council from 1975 until now. As such, he had close acquaintance with the program "New Pathways to Medical Education" and became consultant to Dean Lynn Peterson on Ethical Education for undergraduate medical students.

At the University of Chile School of Medicine, he was appointed Associate Professor in 1947, and in 1963 he became Professor and Chairman of Pathophysiology. Thereafter, he became Director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine. When the School of Medicine was divided into four academic units, he worked at the southern branch of the School of Medicine, located at the Barros-Luco-Trudeau Hospital, from 1970 to 1979. From 1980 on, he was specially enthusiastic about teaching physiological sciences to small groups of medical students in his Laboratory of Pathophysiology of the reunified School of Medicine. He encouraged teaching via small scale experimental research and problem solving methodology.

His main area of research was the central nervous system, where he made contributions on acetylcholine synthesis and on the effects of ionizing radiation and ethanol, benzene and toluene. For these studies, he won the Rutherford Prize 1985 from the Nuclear

Institution, London, and the Golden Book of Harvard Medical School. In Chile he had been awarded the Lucas Sierra Prize in 1951. Thereafter, he received several awards from the Chilean Society of Cardiology and the Society of Nutrition, due to specific contributions to these areas.

In 1968 he started the Chair of Pathophysiology at the School of Medicine, University of Chile, Valparaíso branch. In 1993 he was distinguished as Honorary Professor of that School of Medicine, which had become part of the University of Valparaíso.

When he was appointed Chair of Pathophysiology, he edited a treatise on General Pathophysiology (Egaña *et al*, 1963), which has been considered a fundamental textbook for several generations of students and physicians. This treatise received laudatory comments from prominent scientists, such as Nobel laureate Bernardo Houssay who described it as: "*a prototype of a teaching publication and a splendid textbook, which will promote the interest of a great number of Spanish-speaking young people for scientific medicine*". To raise such interest was undoubtedly Professor Egaña's highest achievement in his academic life. He succeeded in encouraging medical knowledge, based on solid scientific grounds, and encouraged practicing medicine with competence, knowledge and a willingness to serve people. Giving medical practitioners a scientific background was one of his most lasting achievements. He showed great enthusiasm and interest in achieving this goal by enrolling clinicians from the University Clinical Hospital José-Joaquín Aguirre and the Barros-Luco-Trudeau Hospital in this task.

Today, when "evidence-based medicine" is emphasized, we should consider Professor Egaña as a pioneer in this type of work encompassing sound knowledge with human understanding. Not only he saw and stressed the values of the pathophysiological bases of medicine, but also added a psycho-social perspective to the learning process. In addition, Professor Egaña sought to add bioethical values to decisions involved in the research and management of

experimental and clinical disciplines. This was an unquestionable manifestation of his spiritual assessment of human beings and other living creatures. Consequently, he was eagerly involved in the debates on animal research, and the conservation and care of the species used in those projects.

Professor Egaña was confident in the ability of his medical students to organize their own education while satisfying the learning process. Correspondingly, the students recognized him as a model teacher and gave him such recognition at a special meeting they held in his honor in 1993, at the School of Medicine. Also, he had a personal interest in the quality of research professionals and practicing physicians. This was eloquently expressed in another initiative he championed, the creation of the MD/PhD degree. It was the conceptual sum of an outstanding academic activity dedicated to human health, where the coalescence of science and practical knowledge would be properly achieved.

He lived and loved Medicine as very few people have, with total dedication, perseverance and fidelity that remained unabated until his departure. It is possible that such loyalty (as happens when an insuperable attraction conflicts with our most cherished devotions) could have affected his next of kin, to whom he had wished otherwise to dedicate all his energy and virtues. Now is the time to honor the merits and personal commitment of someone superbly endowed for an outstanding medical career, and one who found the way to succeed in his dedication to his fellow men. Having fulfilled his task, Professor Egaña has earned his rest. His trajectory, accomplishments and projects have enriched the University of Chile School of Medicine. At the same time, we salute his immediate family for their understanding and support that made possible such remarkable career. Many others will share with us his memory and his life.

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