

### Joaquim Antunes de Azevedo, PhD

Armando Porto

**J**oaquim Antunes de Azevedo, PhD was born in Mosteiró - Vila do Conde, in 1908, and died in Coimbra, in 1988.

He graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of Coimbra in July 1932, after a course filled with academic honors, and was invited to become a Physician a few months later. In 1947 he gained his graduation with a high score of 19 points.

A dedicated employee for 25 years, first in the discipline of Pediatrics, then in Infectious diseases, and finally, in Clinical Medicine Therapy, he always exercised the three-fold function of teacher, researcher and physician in a way that was praiseworthy.

He was one of the most illustrious sons of the University of Coimbra, where he distinguished himself not only by his intellectual ability, scientific skill and excellent clinical sense, but above all, for his human qualities that made him a unique person. He was a true Master, loved by all his disciples and employees.

In 1957, now an Associate Professor in Internal Medicine, he became responsible for teaching, and for the Infectious Diseases Service, and in 1959 he laid the foundations for the creation of the Respiratory Resuscitation Center at Coimbra University Hospitals (HUC), which would prove to be of vital importance for a large number of patients.

It was during this period that I had daily contact with Professor Antunes de Azevedo, a contact that was prolonged during the Medical Therapy Service, which he supervised from October 1962.

I was able, over more than ten years, to appreciate and witness, during the tough reality of the daily hospital routine, his qualities as an academic and as a physician, and above all, the delight that emanated from this kind of personality, who would find out the difficulties afflicting his fellow men, and immediately begin searching for the respective solution. A close working relationship, in which I was always the one who benefited the most, did not allow me, at that time, to fully understand the greatness of the mission that



he performed with such dedication.

When he became the Clinical Director of the HUC, his frequent absences on official business led me to see, more clearly, the impoverishment that these absences represented for the Service. All his employees and disciples felt, at these times, how great the force of his stimulating and calming presence was.

Meanwhile, following the law of life, I myself became the director of the Hospital Service, in 1972, I would often seek his advice, which was always wise, and before taking decisions, I would focus on the parameters that I knew my Master would have used in similar situations.

Afterwards, another of his employees was called to set up and direct another Medical Service in a General Hospital who that took its first steps in Coimbra. And others, who reached leadership positions, never forgetting the true School in which they were trained for Internal Medicine.

Professor Antunes de Azevedo left valuable works, a reflection of his fine spirit, vast scientific culture and solid clinical training. Written with great clarity

and logical deduction, these are still read with great benefit.

Many of his works were dedicated to the circulatory system, having been an attentive follower of Clinical Cardiology, without ever losing the overall sense of Internal Medicine.

In the city of Coimbra and throughout the Central Region of Portugal, to speak his name was to mention a great physician, an exceptional internist.

If being an internist is knowing how to evaluate the suffering patient in his entirety, without fictitious divisions, in order to return him to a state of health, Professor Antunes de Azevedo was one of the greatest internists of his time.

He knew how to link his in-depth medical culture, the result of reflective reading, and his practice of integrating of all the data he had learned, in the noble application of the concrete needs of the patient, with the goal of total recovery.

He was Vice-President of the Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine, and I saw the joy with which, in 1983, he received the news that the Society to which he had dedicated so much knowledge and effort was to be re-started.

Among so many virtues that characterized him, there was one that delighted everybody: His skill in being able to establish agreement. If there was, in the Portuguese University, someone with whom it could be graced, it would be, without doubt, Professor Joaquim Antunes de Azevedo.

In the exercise of his clinical activity, he made the contrast very clear, between depersonalized Medicine, which is so strongly criticized, and humanized Medicine, of which he was a loyal interpreter.

He was always close to the perfect physician, because he knew how to offer his patients the resources of his intellect and his affection, in the right measure. While, where humanely possible, he always provided the precise diagnosis and the correct prescription, he never forgot to give a word of comfort and hope, which are the best balm for human suffering.

He was an altruistic physician to his friends and relatives and a dedicated friend to all patients, who held him in veneration. He did not demand his rights, but never forgot his duties.

His life was one of dignity, serenity, patience and enrichment. His word and council were just and opportune. His intellectual, moral, and affective qualities were of the highest caliber, and his character was

marked by honesty and goodness.

For the love he had for the medical profession and for Humanity, expressed in his boundless goodness, and also in his solid preparation and vast experience, he was a clinical doctor of great distinction, great resources, both admired and respected for his rare concern and ethical correction.

He taught science and medical arts like few others, cured countless patients, and always sought to soothe the pain. But his justice, dignity and goodness were the greatest attributes of his noble spirit. He was great, above all, because he was kind! ■