

Corino de Andrade

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On the last 10th of June, Corino de Andrade, celebrated his 90th birthday. It is a good moment to remember a man who has clearly influenced Neurology, scientific research, working concepts and hospital care in Portugal.

A man born and rooted in Alentejo, always proud of his origins, Corino was born in Moura spending his childhood and adolescence in Beja, where his father was a Veterinarian. Then he went on to Lisbon Medical School where he graduated in 1928, training after that already in Neurology with Prof. Antonio Flores.

His restless spirit, soon drove him to emigrate working from 1930 to 1938, in the Neurology Clinic of Strasbourg Medical School, directed by Barré, firstly as voluntary assistant and then as Head of Clinic. It was there where his never ending interest in Neuropathology started, founding, through Barré's proposal the laboratory he headed.

In 1936, he spent one year in Berlin, working with two famous neuropathologists, Cecil and Oskar Vogt, from whom he remained a personal friend. Throughout this European period, he came acquainted and socialized with some of Neurology most illustrious names, then in an extraordinary expansion stage.

The eminence of war, the disease and death of his father, forced his return to Portugal, where he crossed the unavoidable environment of rejection, historically reserved to the expatriates. On his own ways, he started from scratch: he came north and then, after a short period in the Hospital Conde Ferreira, he arrived at Hospital Santo Antonio, by the hand of the then ombudsman Antonio Luis Gomes. With a license to work for ... one year, ending up eventually in almost a lifetime.

With a hammer and diapason, he became a kind of walking neurologist through the hospital wards where soon he found out, with his fine shrewdness a newly graduated doctor Joao Resende who would become his main assistant and the indispensable basis for all his future work. From the professional and personal complementarily between these two men, Neurology Clinic emerged and years later the Neurology Service



of Santo Antonio General Hospital in Porto.

His inclusive and motivating personality for team work, along his already remarkable professional and humane dimension have appealed in the 50ties and 60ties to a lot of “new blood”, first Pereira Guedes, Jorge Campos, after Antonio Coimbra, Manuel Canijo, Rocha e Melo, Leão Ramos, Paulo Mendo, Luís de Carvalho, Silva Araújo e Castro Lopes.

As the clinical needs were growing, the service was unfolding in new divisions as Neurophysiology, Neurosurgery, Neuroradiology and Neuro-anesthesiology, later individualized as autonomous services. Pioneering units were created, as respiratory reanimation, cranio-encephalic and spinal cord traumatology.

In parallel, the observation in 1939 of a patient in Póvoa do Varzim, with a “peculiar form of neuropathy” and the notion that in the family and in the

land there were very many similar patients, led to the beginning of the disease investigation that for some still carry his name – Andrade’s disease, paramyloidosis or hereditary amyloidotic polyneuropathy. After a sublime clinical description and comprehensive neuropathological studies, Corino de Andrade, according to his usual strategy started to interest other people in particular aspects of the disease, getting new helpers: Pedro Pinho Costa, who found the neurochemistry laboratory; Gonçalves Moreira and Falcão de Freitas in Cardiology; Abel Gomes, in neurophthalmology. The research was expanding leading to the creation in 1960 of The Center for the Study of Paramyloidosis.

When retiring in 1976, one could think that Corino de Andrade would look after his garden and his books. Pure mistake: he simply crossed the street, starting with Nuno Gomes and with the help of several expatriate Portuguese scientists that he succeeded to enthusiasm for the project, a new Medical School the Biomedical Science Institute Abel Salazar of Porto University, keeping him very busy on the 10 following years.

Whether in the hospital aspect, or in the research, always harmoniously associated, Dr. Corino, was always the same: the ability to diagnose situations, an extraordinary shrewdness for predicting future developments, the knowledge of potentialities (and limitations) in people that were looking for him, the constant stimuli for improvement, through training abroad (for which they were, often reluctantly pushed) which would be translated afterwards by important qualitative jumps in the respective area. From his secret it is also part the rare capacity of encouraging team spirit and the enthusiasm for the service where all worked well beyond the due working hours, being an active part of the achieved progress. It is a kind of universal wisdom for which there is no word in Portuguese – Dr. Corino is un “sage”.

Anyone who imagines Corino de Andrade as a conventional scientist is wrong. He was and is a man of the world, relentless interested and attentive to new ideas and new movements in the most different fields of human activity. He was therefore always a person with whom it was fascinating to talk about books, politics, food or almost anything at all. To attend his service where every Saturday morning, he would gather a group of the most diverse people, could mean so different things as debating Antonio Machado, Indian Religions, the Greeks or how to learn to love

or loath *choucroute*.

He was not a distant chief. Small and long talks were part of our daily life, passing the library, the heart of the service, almost full by a long table at the top of which he would sit as a spider. His little manias, the abrupt questions and puzzling ones, his distractions, made our days full, and still today we remember our eternal “boss” with a friendly smile. To enter his zone of influence modified the life of many, both professionally as personally.

It remains the clear notion of having found “one-of-a-kind” different, genial, without any relation with the usual Portuguese average. To know Dr Corino was and will always be a privilege. ■