



IN MEMORIAM

Miguel Ángel de la Cal, a life dedicated to practicing medicine in the public sector



Miguel Ángel de la Cal studied Medicine at Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain, and completed his residency at Clínica de la Concepción. During this time, he always had a combative attitude and a strong social sensitivity in favor of what he considered fair and just. This attitude was not easy to live by during the late Franco era and required courage and determination, both of which have been a trademark of his own life.

He was hired as an Associate Physician in Intensive Care Medicine at Hospital de Bellvitge, Barcelona, Spain. During one of the first doctor strikes held in Spain, a significant group of participants were kicked out. In the intensive care unit, all strikers were ejected including Miguel Ángel. This unfortunate event turned out to be a true blessing for us.

I had just reached the position of Department Head in a newly established intensive care unit at Hospital Central de la Cruz Roja in Madrid, Spain. We had an opening to complete the staff, and I interviewed one of the brightest associates from Bellvitge who had not been kicked out because the strike coincided with his stay at Hammersmith Hospital in London, United Kingdom. I suggested he should join us, but he replied that since two of his colleagues were unemployed due to the ejection, he could not take the position I was offering him. I asked him about the characteristics of two potential candidates, and at that moment, he described Miguel Ángel—one of them—as the doctor with the greatest ability to add new knowledge.

Over the years, we have had the opportunity to verify that this was the accurate description, and that his contribution to the group that was coming to be, at that time, would change our lives for the better.

His foresight to anticipate what was coming allowed him to prepare for its arrival, and his ability to deeply understand and implement this knowledge benefited us all including the patients. Evidence-based medicine and Selective Digestive Decontamination are two clear examples.

His commitment to Public Health led him to be part of the Spanish Ministry of Health, in the team of Minister Ernest Lluch as the Director General of Public Health. Once again, his personal characteristics left an indelible mark during a crucial period in which the General Health Act is drafted laying the foundations for the universalization of healthcare, Spain's membership in the European Community, and the establishment of the Health Research Fund.

For years, he was the driving force behind the Infectious Diseases Group of the Pan-American and Iberian Federation of Intensive Care Medicine. Here, he not only passed on his truly remarkable knowledge to the group, but also provided them with the appropriate thought processes to apply treatment to patients. His tenure as the Director of the journal *Medicina Intensiva* was truly relevant giving it significant organizational and scientific momentum. Back in 2012, he became the Head of the Department at Hospital Universitario de Getafe, Madrid, Spain where he continued his work of pushing forward and leadership in both practical healthcare organization and clinical research.

This hasty review is not enough to showcase his work in the training of residents, to whom he transmitted not only his vast amount of knowledge but, most importantly, the way to approach and manage patients, and what is truly exceptional, his way of thinking regarding Medicine.

Everyone who had the privilege of working with him will remember him as an intelligent, honest, and loyal person, as well as a brilliant scientist. He was truly an example to follow as physicians. We are among the few privileged ones who enjoyed his friendship and companionship, and we must say that he touched our lives as both doctors and individuals, and he did so for the better. Had we not known Miguel Ángel, our lives would have been different and undoubtedly worse. Thank you, friend.

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On behalf of the current and past members of the Intensive Care Medicine Department of Hospital Universitario de Getafe, Madrid, Spain