



Dr. Helí Hernández-Ayazo, MD, FACP
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“When a Brother Leaves”

Along life’s journey, we encounter people who, by chance, or due to circumstances beyond the understanding of science, are inimitable. These people who we are immensely fortunate to have known and to have had by our side for many years of our lives include Dr. Helí Hernández-Ayazo: teacher of teachers, mentor, work and life partner, colleague, friend and brother. A man who was also a leader and guide in positioning Colombian internal medicine at the Latin American level, for which he engaged and literally impassioned Colombian and Latin American colleagues from Mexico to Argentina.

Dr. Helí Hernández graduated from medical school in 1977. He did his rural service in Mompox (Bolívar), where he met and married Miriam Abuabara, his constant companion and mother of his three children: Marcos Aurelio, Diana Paola and Helí Rafael. He was my professor at Universidad de Cartagena beginning during my undergraduate medical studies, from which I graduated in 1987, and taught me wisdom, friendship, love for people and how to plan work and life projects. I continued studying

internal medicine at the same university, following in his steps since 1992.

Dr. Helí Hernández-Ayazo filled many positions at the Universidad de Cartagena School of Medicine and, step by step, with his impressive clarity of thought, ability to create, optimism and hard work, left his own mark of quality and innovation on each position. He taught in positions ranging from instructor to full professor and was head of the Department of Internal Medicine and Preventive Med-

icine, vice dean of the Universidad de Cartagena School of Medicine, leader and co-author of several curricular proposals at our alma mater, recognized for his exceptional intelligence and academic leadership over 44 years of service, and professor and mentor of many alumni.

Dr. Helí Hernández-Ayazo was characterized by his dedication to personal improvement in academic and research areas, which led him to earn a doctorate in education sciences from the Red de Universidades Estatales de Colombia (RUDECOLOMBIA - Colombian Network of Public Universities) at Universidad de Nariño in 2011. Dr. Helí Hernández-Ayazo's doctoral thesis, titled "The Beginning of Medicine in Cartagena de Indias in the Sixteenth Century: An analysis of Juan Méndez Nieto's book, *Discursos Medicinales: desde la perspectiva histórico-educativa*" (guided by Dr. Juan Marchena, distinguished professor and historian at Universidad Pablo de Olavide [Sevilla, Spain] and Diana Soto, professor at UPTC and coordinator of RUDECOLOMBIA), was deemed meritorious, tracing a new research path on medical education in sixteenth century Colombia.

In the field of extended and continued education, Dr. Helí Hernández-Ayazo distinguished himself in a singular, and we could even say unique, way: he functioned as president of the Asociación Colombiana de Medicina Interna (ACMI®) [Colombian Internal Medicine Association] from 2014-2016, during which time he managed the transition from the Asociación Procongreso de Medicina Interna [Association for the Promotion of an Internal Medicine Congress] to the organizing of an ACMI® Colombian Internal Medicine Congress, a longed-for dream of all internists at that time. He was elected president of the Sociedad Latinoamericana de Medicina Interna (SOLAMI) [Latin American Society of Internal Medicine] and achieved the internationalization of ACMI®. He was pivotal in achieving the representativity and prestige that ACMI® has today; he participated in the International Forum of Internal Medicine (FIMI in Spanish) as a founding

member since 2018 and was a member of the first Steering Committee, as chancellor.

Dr. Hernández-Ayazo also successfully launched the Colombian Chapter of the ACP, led at that time by Dr. Roberto Esguerra, contributing to the growth of the Colombian Chapter of this leading international association of internal medicine, and was an example to follow for many internists from the Caribbean area of Colombia who followed in his footsteps as leaders in ACMI, SOLAMI and FIMI.

Furthermore, he had a very successful career as a 33rd degree Grand Master of a Masonic Lodge, and member of the National and Cartagena Academies of Medicine. In all these activities, Helí was known for his ability to plan, manage, speak, advise and resolve conflicts. And beyond this, Helí Hernández-Ayazo is recognized today by a multitude of pupils - undergraduates, specialists, super-specialists and doctors - who remember him as a professor of internal medicine and the creator of the slogan that unites and identifies us: «**Promoting the pride of being an internist.**»

My friend, Helí, this is the time to record for posterity a sample of our respect, affection and gratitude, still thinking that our minds and hearts are wrapped in a cloud while we come to terms with this painful reality. **Helí:** go in peace, as we our students release you and will preserve your legacy by improving medical education and internal medicine, which is what identified you and what you built with and for the Colombian and Latin American medical community, your family, students, colleagues and friends: **it will be forever engraved within us.**

Farewell, Friend.

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