

Eulogy to Jorge Luis Gross and Mirela Jobim de Azevedo

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Anna Karenina (by Liev Tolstoi), probably the best novel ever written, says in its opening lines: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy its own way”, each one of us, colleagues and friends of Mirela & Jorge, will mourn their absence in its own way.

Just now we can cry for the sudden loss of these extraordinary couple, Mirela & Jorge Luis. We can mourn them together with their families, but it will be wrong to remember them through the tragedy that took them away. We can do better, by remembering what they did, and achieved during the time it was allowed to them to be with us.

I was not a personal friend of them; I never worked with them (although, I would have loved to have him as my formal mentor); we not even lived in the same city, but through the years we developed a bond, a trust, and a partnership that goes beyond anything I could write. My dealings with him were mainly when I (10 years younger than him) needed advice about the care of a certain patient or condition, and didn't know to whom to call, but it was always to Jorge Luis, that altruistically, gently, and always friendly that I would appeal. And always, always would have the proper and kind answer.

Jorge Luis was what in Yiddish (the “língua franca” of the Jews from Eastern Europe) is called: “a Mensch” (a noble and respectable person; someone to admire and emulate). Sir William Osler would have been proud of his clinical skills, and any researcher would find difficult to match his competency. His lectures and presentations were always superb (sharp, clear, and easy to understand).

After finishing his PhD, at USP Ribeirão Preto, in 1975, Jorge Luis returned to his Alma Mater (UFRGS), and very fast transformed the already existing Endocrinology Unit into a leading Center, including: Clinical, Research, and Teaching. In order to fulfill the competencies required, he trained several students, recruited the best minds, and sent people to the top centers around the world. This new generation is obliged to assume the helm before it was expected, but they will do their task, because he trained them well, and it is what is expected of them.

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People who worked with him described him as being: bright; capable of integrating several fields of knowledge; able to formulate the proper questions, which would be answered by careful research. He had no compromise with laziness, or dishonesty. At the end of the day, what counted was the greater benefit for the patient.

His main research interest was about the chronic complications of diabetes mellitus, and he published several studies that range from the epidemiological; clinical and treatment of this condition. In 1983, already very successful (both in the academic and private clinic) he decided to expand his training, and expend one year in a Post-Doc at Guy's Hospital, in London.

Mirela was also a tremendous achiever, in a short span of only 18 years she graduated from Medical School and achieved the pinnacle of the academic path, her "Livre-Docência". She became one of the youngest Full Professor at UFRGS. Her CV is impressive, even not taking in account her brief career: Over 100 published papers; over 30 Post-Graduation thesis supervisions; more than 80 Examination Boards for thesis membership.

Mirela was a reviewer for several leading Medical Journal, in Brazil, and abroad. Students loved her lectures, and she was an acclaimed "Honored teacher".

But besides all her professional and academic achievements, the one she cared more was her daughter, Luisa, a young medical student, for whom the loss of these wonderful people would resent more. We, the friends and admirers of Mirela and Jorge Luis have an obligation to look after her.

Jorge Luis also had three other sons, from his first marriage, one of them a very well-known physician in Porto Alegre.

The great American poet, Walt Whitman wrote a magnificent poem at the time of President Lincoln death, and with all due respect, I believe that "O Captain! My Captain" can be used to express our gratitude and respects for these wonderful people:

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.
O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
 Here Captain! dear father!
 This arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

Brazilian Endocrinologists, for one last time, lend me your attention, please stand up, Mirela and Jorge Luis have passed on.

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