

GACETA MÉDICA DE MÉXICO

EDITORIAL

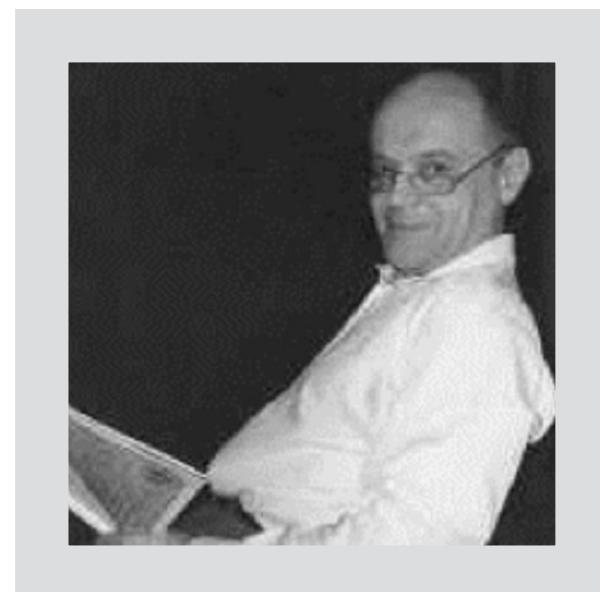
Jean François Marie Aicardi (1926-2015)

Mario A. Alonso-Vanegas and Salvador Vergara-López

Sadness overwhelms me for the departure of a great friend who taught us and walked with us in this journey through the world of epilepsy. Our dear Jean Aicardi passed away in the morning of August 3, 2015, at 88 years of age. He was born on November 8 in 1926 and grew in Mediterranean French lands, in the district of Rambouillet. Later, he started his professional career in the faculty of medicine of the big capital city, Paris, by the river Seine, and graduated in the year of 1955.

During his internship at the *Hôpital de la Salpêtrière* under Raymond Garcin's influence he developed his passion for neurology. Later, he started having great interest on pediatric neurology at the *Hôpital des Enfants*, under the guardianship of a magnificent professor and neurologist, creator of the first school of pediatric neurology in France, Stéphane Thieffry, who was his first mentor and had great impact on his life. On his first years of residence, he was already preparing his thesis on "convulsive disorders on the first year of life", a work that led him to get professionally involved with the director of the regional center for children with epilepsy, who collaborated for several years with the Henri Jean Pascal Gastaut International League against Epilepsy as secretary.

Jean travelled to the historical city of Boston, in Massachusetts, USA, where his interest on pediatric neurology continued. He was a visiting scholar at the Children's Hospital Medical Center carrying out a research fellowship at Harvard's school of medicine. He had the opportunity to increase his knowledge on pediatric neurology. In 1956, he returned to France. He started his health care activities as a pediatrician in the children's surgery department at the *Hôpital des Enfants Malades*. Then, in 1964, he started a great collaboration in the pediatric neurology department of the *Hôpital Saint Vincent de Paul* together with Thieffry until 1979. That same year, he returned with his group to create and direct the new pediatric neurology unit. In this period, he joined the *Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale* (INSERM) and was the director of such a prestigious institution from 1986 until his retirement in 1991.



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Aicardi was member of multiple pediatric neurology associations and groups in Europe and the USA. He was a pediatric neurology honorary professor at the Institute of Child Health in London, United Kingdom. He received multiple recognitions, including: the Hower award of the American Child Neurology Society in 1986, the award for research in epilepsy of the American Epilepsy Society in 1995, the Ramón y Cajal award, the epilepsy ambassador award of the ILAE-IBE and the life achievement award granted by the ILAE-IBE. In 1999, he became founding editor and later chief editor of the *Epileptic Disorders* magazine, which has turned into the ILAE's educational publication.

He authored over 260 international articles in high-impact journals and 110 chapters in books on pediatric neurology. Jean Aicardi described the clinical signs

and symptoms of various neurological diseases in pediatrics, including the triad infantile spasms, partial or total agenesis of the corpus callosum and variable ophthalmologic abnormalities, which today bears his name as the Aicardi syndrome. His book "Diseases of the nervous system in childhood" has turned into the Bible of pediatric neurology in all libraries.

I met Jean at the Neurological Institute of Montreal in 1994 during my epilepsy surgery and functional neurosurgery training. He was a talented, energetic

and simple man, with a fair dose of humbleness and great friend to his friends, among them a special, most appreciated one, my epileptology professor, Frederick Andermann. Jean Aicardi contributed to humanity with his passion and sense of search for the "reason" or the "why?" in our profession's art. Aicardi's legacy remains as a legacy in the pages of his manuscripts, through the knowledge and skills of those who are now great child neurologists throughout the world, a true educator, a universal man.