

## Professor João Romildo Bueno – Physician, psychiatrist, psychopharmacologist, and much more

*Professor João Romildo Bueno – Médico, psiquiatra, psicofarmacologista e muito mais*

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Professor Romildo Bueno

Professor Romildo Bueno was born in 1938 in the Brazilian village of Cambuí, in Minas Gerais. Cambuí remains a small town with less than 30,000 inhabitants, but Romildo Bueno's inquisitive and restless mind brought him from his tiny hometown to the highest positions in Brazilian Psychiatry.

Before committing his life to Medicine, Romildo Bueno worked as office-assistant, bank officer, translator of pocket books, and newspaper reviewer. In 1959, Romildo Bueno was admitted to the prestigious medical school of the *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* (UFRJ). His great scientific potential was recognized early on. In the third year of medical school, Romildo Bueno was invited by noted Professor Lauro Sollero, the chairman of the Department of Pharmacology of the UFRJ, to join his research team with a CNPq grant. Having graduated in late 1964, Romildo Bueno became chief resident in the Institute of Psychiatry (IPUB) of the *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* and struggled to reconcile the new clinical duties with his ongoing fruitful psychopharmacological research. Next, Romildo Bueno pursued additional scientific and clinical training in some of the best research centers in the USA: the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute, the Galesburg State Research Hospital (under the mentorship of Harold E. Himwich) and the New York Psychiatric Institute da Columbia (with Ronald R. Fieve).

Back to Brazil, Romildo Bueno joined the IPUB faculty, successfully defended his PhD thesis intitled "Antidepressant Substances: Possible Mechanisms of Actions" and became the editor in chief of the *Jornal Brasileiro de Psiquiatria*. He was instrumental in changing the perception of the nature of Psychiatry among Brazilian psychiatrists. In the early 70s, psychodynamic concepts largely prevailed in Brazil and the idea that mental disorders had a biological basis was an anathema. Through his high-quality studies, encyclopedic knowledge, charisma, notable teaching skills and also the sheer force of his personality, Romildo Bueno helped introduce in Brazil a more nuanced concept of the etiology of mental disorders, which also included their biological underpinnings. In a few years, inspired by his example, a large following of students, residents and PhD candidates had formed around Romildo Bueno and engaged in the research of the neurobiology of mental disorders. As academic mentor, Romildo helped to forge the minds of other brilliant Brazilian Psychiatrists as Professors Marco Antonio Brasil, Ivan

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Figueira, Jerson Laks, Paulo Mattos José Carlos Appolinario, Jorge Adelino, among many others. Even after retiring from IPUB as a full professor, Romildo Bueno continued to teach and motivate the new generations of psychiatrists<sup>1</sup>.

Romildo Bueno's greatest sources of pride were the accomplishments of his alumni and his role in building and strengthening the *Associação Brasileira de Psiquiatria* (ABP). During his 50-year long tenure at the ABP, Romildo Bueno was its chairman (1983-1986), treasurer (2010-2016) and editor of the scientific journal "*Debates em Psiquiatria*"<sup>2-4</sup>. He and his companions at the ABP struggled to break the long-standing stigma surrounding Psychiatry and the ideological forces seeking to ban it. One cannot say they have completely succeeded. Millions of our fellow citizens living in the poor regions surrounding the city of Rio de Janeiro are still deprived of any effective treatment for their depressions, anxieties, post-traumatic stresses, drug dependences and suicidal ideas. But the real worth of a man cannot be gauged only by his victories. As Bertolt Brecht once wrote "There are men that fight one day and are good. There are

others that fight for a year and are better. Some fight for many years and are very good. But there are those who fight all their lives. Those are the indispensable ones." Professor Romildo Bueno may not be any more among us but his fights go on. He was indeed one of the indispensables and will be sorely missed, even though his legacy for the Brazilian Psychiatry is perennial.

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