



Editorial

Donato D'Angelo – a pioneer[☆]



Donato D'Angelo – um pioneiro

The beginnings of orthopedics as an academic institution and specific professional activity in Brazil dates back to approximately 60 years ago.

Before then, patients with clinical problems of the locomotor apparatus were treated by surgeons or pediatricians, and those with problems resulting from trauma by surgeons or curious individuals who had the skill of putting bones and joints “back into place”.

Orthopedics began through the actions of some self-taught physicians and others who had the possibility of undergoing training abroad and brought knowledge acquired at clinics in other countries.

The dissemination of this knowledge was very slow. It was done through books and a very small number of journals in foreign languages that were sent to Brazil. In this manner, these gentlemen had great power: the power of knowledge. Jealous of this power, some of these pioneers shared this knowledge very parsimoniously and only allowed close assistants to acquire part of this knowledge, which had been brought back with “such difficulty”.

The power of some of these first professors resembled that of a “king”, since they determined approaches and treatments in a way that did not allow questioning and they acted on their assistants' lives in an authoritarian manner. They even decided where their assistants should work.

The relationship in most clinics was one of unquestioning obedience or dismissal, and the relationship between clinics was similar to what existed in Europe at the time of the small fiefdoms: respect for my power or war.

Orthopedics lost out greatly during those years, since any form of development was regarded as a threat. Some of these august professors did not accept being questioned and, without the stimulus of questioning, became mediocre. It was rare for them to return to the major centers of Europe or the United States for updates. Exchange of information was seen as a threat.

There were disputes between clinics in the same city, between clinics in neighboring cities and, even worse, between clinics in different states.

There were several exceptions among the pioneers of orthopedics. Even some of the old “kings” renewed themselves over the course of their professional lives and created clinics that today are some of the foundations of Brazilian orthopedics.

There was one pioneering professor who lived through those times with a history very similar to that of the others, but who was a man ahead of his time. He took part in this era of orthopedics without ever becoming contaminated with the “power of knowledge” and always believed in the evolution of Brazilian orthopedics through continuing medical education.

At the Brazilian Society of Orthopedics and Traumatology (SBOT), and in other bodies that used his contacts with foreign clinics positively, he always defended medical residency as a form of training.

He founded the Brazilian Journal of Orthopedics (Revista Brasileira de Ortopedia, RBO) and led it for 28 years with the aim of having a means of dissemination of orthopedic knowledge in Portuguese for Brazilians. He aimed to form a strong and representative Brazilian orthopedics community.

This was Professor Donato D'Angelo, who suffered a devastating stroke in 2006 and passed away this year. However, the marks that he left will be with us forever.

In this issue of the RBO, we publish an article by Professor Donato D'Angelo, written years ago, which in 2007 was shown to Dr. Osvandré by José Avelino, who was Professor Donato's private secretary. José Avelino forwarded the diskette with a note in which he expressed Professor Donato's willingness to have it published. This study, which formed part of his doctoral thesis presented in 1970, gives an idea to our younger colleagues of his discernment, education and orthopedic knowledge.

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The medical world has evolved, since knowledge has become accessible. Orthopedics has also grown and has become a broad specialty that is much sought by young physicians.

Today in Brazil, we have an active orthopedics community, which has already hosted several international congresses. It has also been represented at many societies within our specialty around the world, by very well selected young professionals. We have centers of excellence that provide training and we can be proud of being Brazilian orthopedists, as Donato D'Angelo desired.

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