

Obituary—Ivo Pitanguy (1923–2016)

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Life teaches me every day. I believe that the sad thing about dying is to stop feeling this desire to always learn a bit more.

Ivo Pitanguy, MD, FACS [1].

I was deeply saddened to receive the news of the death of Professor Ivo Pitanguy. Although I knew he was suffering from chronic renal failure and undergoing dialysis treatments, his departure was really shocking. On the day before his death, he was portrayed in a wheelchair carrying the Olympic torch in his beloved city: Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

I was a teenager when I first heard of the amazing work being carried out by Ivo Pitanguy in that part of the world. I decided to study medicine and pursue a career in plastic surgery because of him. Being accepted first as a foreigner resident in his residency program, and later appointed chief resident was a dream come true.

Born Ivo Helcius Jardim de Campos Pitanguy, on July 5, 1923 in Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais, Brazil), he soon developed an interest in medicine under the tutelage of his father who was a general surgeon. He trained as general surgeon in Rio and in order to gain experience in plastic surgery, he trained in France with Marc Iselin, Paul Tessier, Claude Dufourmentel, and Roger Mouly; in the

UK with Sir Harold Gillies and Archibald McIndoe; and in the USA with John Marquise Converse and John Longacre. After working alongside such great surgeons, Professor Pitanguy moved back to his home country and established his school of plastic surgery, affiliated to the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) at first and later also to the Carlos Chagas Postgraduate Medical School. Since the creation of his school, more than 600 surgeons from Brazil and 40 other countries trained there. He promoted a didactic model of training which relied on a systematic approach making surgical techniques simpler and reproducible even in novice hands. His willingness to share his knowledge and expertise made him one of the greatest plastic surgeons of all time. The program celebrated its 56th anniversary and its success is noted by the worldwide spread of his philosophy [2].

Although he was best known for developing aesthetic surgery techniques during the 60s and 70s, his department at the 38th Infirmary of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia in Rio de Janeiro provided reconstructive surgery to low-income patients, serving as a training center for his residents. There, aesthetic surgery was also provided at nominal costs popularizing these kinds of surgeries among Brazilians coming from all over the country.

Due to his humanitarian work providing dignity and hope to many patients in need, he received an impressive number of titles and honors, among them being the Culture for Peace prize awarded by Pope John Paul II and the Award for International Dissemination of Medical Research by UNESCO [1].

He wrote over 800 scientific papers published in peer-reviewed Brazilian and international journals. He

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also had a series of books published and contributed with chapters published in various books by different authors.

He was an avid sportsman, tennis player, swimmer, scuba diver, and skier and had a black belt in karate. He was also a nature-lover; his ecological spirit motivated him to create a sanctuary on his private island where several endangered species are still preserved [1].

Ivo Pitanguy changed the world by opening new gates and setting new frontiers for aesthetic surgery. If not for his contributions and legacy, plastic surgery would be a much poorer and deprived specialty than what it is today.

Professor Pitanguy is survived by his wife Marilu Nascimento; four children, Ivo, Gisela, Helcius, and Bernardo; and five grandchildren Ivo, Mikael, Pedro, Rafael, and Antonio Paulo.

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical approval For this type of article, formal consent is not required.

Conflict of interest None.

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