Isabel Valverde, 1937–2018

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I feel deeply honoured by the EASD invitation to write a personal and professional profile of Dr Isabel Valverde (1937–2018), an honorary EASD member. Dr Valverde was first my mentor, and then my colleague and dear friend for over 40 years.

No one can say whether the widely divergent forms of modern diabetes research will once again come together through a ground-breaking discovery, as they first did with the discovery of insulin; but the one certainty is that the efforts of generations of diabetes specialists, pathologists, statisticians and biochemists have greatly contributed to the progress in knowledge of this disease.

One such scientist was Isabel Valverde, born in Vigo, Spain. Isabel obtained her medical degree from the Medical School in Santiago de Compostela in 1962; but she was not satisfied with just ‘diagnosis and treatment’, and the question ‘why?’ took her across the Atlantic to Dallas, USA in 1966. Here she joined the Metabolic Research Section at the Veterans’ Administration Hospital and became initiated in the ‘ins and outs’ of research. In 1969, Isabel returned to Spain, where she developed pioneering independent scientific activity in the Department of Metabolism, Nutrition and Hormones at Fundación Jiménez Díaz, leading the department from 1984 until her retirement in 2002. Following this, Dr Valverde became a permanent Scientific Consultant.

Her research interest was always focused on the study of the mechanisms of action and secretion of pancreatic and intestinal hormones and peptides (including glucagon-like immunoreactivity [GLI], glucagon-like peptides [GLPs], insulin and pancreatic polypeptide [PP]), with proven or possible participation in glucose homeostasis. Her efficient and dedicated work led to a remarkable number of scientific publications in learned journals, which contain fundamental contributions

to our knowledge of the physiology of glucose metabolism in health and disease. The recognition and respect Isabel received from the international community of scientists, including the Spanish Society of Diabetes (SED) award for basic research in diabetes, was well deserved. In addition to her constant research activity, the unfailing dedication and honesty with which she carried it out set an example for many generations of doctors in various areas of biomedical science, both in Spain and abroad, who learned her masterful ways under her caring supervision.

On behalf of the very many colleagues who have had the privilege to know her, I applaud Isabel Valverde, the person and the scientist.

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