

Prof. Dr. Luciano Basauri, M.D. (1932–2008)— ISPN President 1980–1981

Sergio Valenzuela

Received: 2 April 2008 / Published online: 30 April 2008
© Springer-Verlag 2008



On 5 February 2008, during a Chilean summer, Prof. Luciano Basauri passed away after a long sickness which he fought against, as many others have, and lost. He died in a very personal fashion—always knowing what was going on until the last minute and facing it bravely. A great man has died, a great neurosurgeon is gone, a great master has left, and a good friend is no longer around.

As one of his last residents, assistant, fellow pediatric neurosurgeon, and friend, I have been asked to write his obituary—a great honor to any of his ISPN colleagues

S. Valenzuela (✉)
Pediatric Neurosurgery Service,
Instituto de Neurocirugía Asenjo,
JM Infante 553 Providencia, Santiago, Chile
e-mail: Valen1@manquehue.net

Luciano Basauri was born in a small city in Chile named Curicó in 1932 and went to school at the Instituto San Martín in the same city for preparatory and secondary education and graduating there. Then, he entered the University of Concepción, located in a southern city in Chile, to start his studies in medicine, and he later moved to the University of Chile in Santiago where he got his professional title in 1956.

He then entered the Instituto de Neurocirugía under the direction of Prof. Alfonso Asenjo and became a neurosurgeon after 3 years of intensive training.

In 1960–1962, through the Rockefeller Foundation, he developed a mixed fellowship in research and clinics at the Harvard University Medical School under the direction of Professors Sweet and Ballantine, acquiring a solid work methodology and improving his knowledge in neurology and neurosurgery.

In the following 23 years, he worked as a staff neurosurgeon at the *Instituto*, emergency neurosurgeon for many years, head of the adults' neurosurgical team, as well as head of the pediatric neurosurgical team. In particular, he dedicated himself to developing a service for the best care of children by providing a specialized education for many of us who are strict followers of his and for others who passed under his direction as trainees, residents, or fellows in pediatric neurosurgery.

For his dedication, Prof. Basauri should be considered as one of the creators and initiators of this subspeciality in Chile, in South America, as well as in the world.

Among many other educative tasks, Prof. Basauri had been for years the Director of the Post Graduate School at the Instituto and, therefore, in charge of all the Chilean and foreign residents in neurosurgery to whom he was specially fond of. Under his direction, the Residency in Neurosurgery at the Instituto became one of the most demanding but fruitful

programs. Surely there are hundreds of residents that remember how energetic and drastic he could be. His high capacity for work kept him all day long in his office when he is not in the OR, writing papers, reading the latest publications, or programming his next operations, keeping always an eye on the patients under his care. One of his constant quality was not only to be the best neurosurgeon around but also the one ever available for assistance or counseling.

Prof. Basauri's innovative activity at the Instituto was also at the base of the introduction of the pediatric facio-facial surgery, the stereotactic, and the interventional neuroradiological techniques, which he first experienced in 1975 in Paris under the guidance of Professors Tailerach and Djindjian. In 1984, he was appointed Professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Chile.

In 1985, Prof. Basauri left the Instituto and became a staff member at the Clinica Las Condes—one of the most important private clinics in Santiago, where he worked until a couple of months before his death, always pushing to get new technologies. Actually, he was a pioneer in the use of intraoperative techniques such as ecography, angiography, neuronavigation, and neurophysiology.

All through his productive life, he was the author of more than 150 scientific papers and more than ten chapters in neurosurgical books.

Prof. Basauri dedicated himself to the Chilean Society of Neurosurgery, being one its founders and officer for 20 years and becoming its President from 1972 to 1974. He was also involved in the creation of the Federacion Latinoamericana de Sociedades de Neurocirugía (FLANC) and its subsequent organization. He was General Secretary of this association from 1981 to 1984, and he was always a very enthusiastic member, assisting frequently the Latin-American congresses.

With regard to the pediatric specialty, he promoted the Symposium Raul Carrea to encourage pediatric neurosurgery in Latin America.

Dr. Basauri was also one of the pioneer of the International Society for Pediatric Neurosurger (ISPN), dedicating time and efforts to its progress. He became President during the years 1980–1981 and organized one of the most remembered and successful annual scientific meeting in Santiago, Chile.

Basauri was also a member of the AANS, American College of Surgeons, a WFNS-WHO task force for Neurosurgery-ATLS instructor, a member of the WFNS's Committee for education, had nominations, and other accomplishments too long to list.

Luciano Basauri was fondly called “Nano” by his friends and wife, Mrs. Nelly Chioffalo, a world renowned neurologist who shared his life ever since both were residents at the Instituto some 42 years ago. Together, they built a family and raised two sons, Rodrigo and Cristian, who are both well-known professionals. He and Nelly were very fond of outdoors life and sports. They enjoyed fishing, camping, skiing, and also mountain climbing and had been to the base camp of the Everest and the Kilimanjaro. Also, they liked playing golf at Santo Domingo—the place where they usually used to escape to on weekends—and practicing swimming or squash in the last years.

As a final summary, Luciano Basauri was a distinguished gentleman, a great Neurosurgeon, an outstanding professor, and a respected colleague.

My personal recognition and gratitude for the opportunity of having been his resident, assistant, colleague, and friend. He showed to me the path to become a pediatric neurosurgeon, the value of our specialty, and the great chance to help the suffering children.