

Dr. Roberto Rodríguez-Roisin (1946-2025)



On February 27, 2025, Professor Dr. Roberto Rodríguez-Roisin passed away in Barcelona, his beloved Barcelona. Just two days later, his beloved wife, Merce, followed him. Circumstances allowed them to stay together almost until the very last moment, as a corollary to a relationship full of love and mutual respect that lasted for decades.

For those of us who had the opportunity to know him and work with him, his loss leaves a void that is impossible to fill. Dr. Rodríguez had an overwhelming and sometimes even controversial personality due to his high standards (and self-demand) in the pursuit of academic and professional excellence.

“Roro,” as he was affectionately called by his acquaintances, colleagues, and friends, was one of the key figures responsible for the progress of Spanish and Latin American Pulmonology over the last 40 years. His work was based at the Pulmonology Service of the Hospital Clínic Barcelona, where he practiced medicine during his entire professional life.

Dr. Rodríguez-Roisin earned his medical degree (1970) and doctorate (1975) with honors from the University of Barcelona. He was trained in pulmonology at Brompton Hospital in London (1973-74). He became a visiting scientist at the Division of Physiology of the University of California, San Diego (1980-1982), under the mentorship of Professor John West. This experience was crucial for the future scientific and academic growth of his team in Barcelona. It is important to say that once he returned to his city, he worked closely with Dr. Josep Roca and Dr. Joan Albert Barberà, key figures in advancing research on the airways, the pulmonary vasculature, and peripheral muscles, respectively, in patients with chronic obstructive diseases, especially COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). His expertise in the multiple inert gas elimination technique (MIGET) allowed his team to study lung ventilation/perfusion in various situations.

His vision led to the development of a department that not only provided medical care but also engaged in clinical research and postgraduate education with international projection, something that seems common today but wasn't at the time.

As a result of his efforts, dozens of trainees, including me, mostly from Latin America, had the opportunity to delve into pulmonology research and conduct pre- and post-doctoral studies, thereby planting the seed of a modern approach to our specialty, so that it could be applied in our home countries. More than 35 years ago, he was a key figure in the founding of ALAT (Latin American Thoracic Association), an organization in which many of his former students and colleagues have participated and continue to participate. His outstanding work led him to be elected president of the European Respiratory Society (ERS) for the 1992-93 term, and he authored nearly 400 indexed original research articles.

Dr. Rodríguez played a significant role in numerous academic and institutional forums, including serving as the Director of the Pulmonology Service of the Hospital Clínic Barcelona, Head of the Department of Medicine, and its Academic Director. Additionally, he received several scientific distinctions: The Extraordinary Award for Scientific Merit “Josep Trueta” from the Academia Catalana de Ciències Mèdiques (1992); the Extraordinary Award for Biomedical Research “Severo Ochoa” from the Fundación Ferrer (1994); the “Narcís Monturiol” Recognition for Scientific and Technological Merit from the Government of Catalonia (1998), and the Recognition for Scientific Achievement from the Government of Catalonia (2001).

In Argentina, we had the privilege of welcoming him on numerous occasions as a guest speaker at some of the most significant events organized by the Argentinian Association of Respiratory Medicine, such as the Annual Congress and the International Conference on Advances in COPD. At each of these events, he generously and selflessly shared his knowledge.

On a personal level, I must acknowledge his profound influence on my career, as well as on that of many other colleagues. I had the honor of representing the Latin American trainees with a speech at his farewell as Head of Service, and we remained in contact, fostering a relationship built on mutual respect and admiration. He encouraged all those who could contribute to the field, and taught me the value of words, the importance of rigor in work, and the resilience needed to overcome the many challenges faced in scientific and professional life.

Farewell, Roro.

Andrés L. Echazarreta[®]

Former President of the Argentinian Association of Respiratory Medicine.
Former Head of the Pulmonology Service of the HIGA and Hospital San Juan de Dios, La Plata.
Medical Director and Head of the Pulmonology Service of the Centro Médico Capital, La Plata.