




Tom R. Karl¹ , Rodrigo Soto² , Rebeca Pérez González³, Joseph Turek⁴ and Giles Peek⁵ 

Editorial

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Corresponding author:
Tom Karl; Email: trkarl.aus@gmail.com

¹Pediatric Cardiac Research, Discipline of Surgery, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia; ²Gift of Life International, Flushing Meadows, NY, USA; ³Department of Cardiology, CEDIMAT, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; ⁴Department of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA and ⁵Department of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery, Congenital Heart Center, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA



We mourn the passing of our dear friend and colleague Dr Juan León-Wyss, who left us on January 18, 2024 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, following a prolonged and valiant struggle against an intractable stage 4 malignancy. Juan was born in 1963 in Quito, Ecuador, where he received his medical qualification at Universidad Central in 1991. He completed further training in general and cardiovascular surgery at University Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland, and Nemours Cardiac Center, Wilmington, USA. In 1999, Juan was appointed Surgeon-in-Chief, Pediatric Cardiac Surgery, at UNICAR-Fundación Aldo Castañeda in Guatemala. Subsequently, he held positions at Cardiocentro Ticino, Lugano, Switzerland, and Deutsches Herzkompentenz Zentrum in Tübingen, Germany, where he served as director of paediatric cardiac surgery. Juan's final appointment was Surgeon-in-Chief, Pediatric Cardiac Surgery, Centro Cardiovascular CEDIMAT, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Juan was a formidable and central figure in paediatric cardiac surgery in Latin America. He brought a huge experience to the Dominican Republic and helped to build a world-class clinical service at CEDIMAT during his 10 years as director. Juan was, in fact, the *first permanent paediatric cardiac surgeon* in the Dominican Republic, wherein he was instrumental in favourably altering the natural history of CHD. Juan's tenure at CEDIMAT is now considered to be a historic turning point in the development of the speciality in the Dominican Republic. His great legacy is the opportunity that now exists for affected children in the region to acquire a quality of life previously denied to them by circumstances. Thanks to Juan's dedication, skill, and teaching, thousands of children have regained their health, allowing their parents to experience the joy of their child's smile.

Many of us were fortunate to work and collaborate with Juan in Santo Domingo over the years, primarily through Gift of Life International, and we can confirm that he was a masterful technical surgeon and a great strategic thinker (in and out of the operating theatre). He was undaunted by the complexities of late-presenting complex cyanotic children, and even in the advanced stage of his illness, he managed to put in long hours in pursuit of surgical excellence. Juan was also a regular contributor to the academic literature, and active in multiple collaborative studies, many relating to addressing surgical problems specific to Latin America.

Beyond his technical surgical skills, Juan was a humanitarian and a devoted family man. He was a knowledgeable and cultured citizen of the world, who could converse fluently in five languages on a variety of subjects. Juan had a great ironic sense of humour. His skills and humility earned him the respect of the many colleagues who had the opportunity to work with him over the years, and he is now a legend in the Dominican Republic and elsewhere in Latin America.

Juan's presence in our speciality was huge, and his time with us was too short. Juan will be remembered and missed by his many friends and colleagues, and we offer our sincere condolences to his family.