



IN MEMORIAM

Ariel Reyes

Professor Ariel Jorge Reyes y Garcia, a friend of academic medicine in South Africa, died in Montevideo, Uruguay in August 2006, shortly after his 63rd birthday. His involvement in original research at the University of Natal Medical School between 1979 and 1991 did much to bring that institution to the attention of colleagues in the Americas and the Latin countries of Europe.

Ariel Reyes was a product of the Uruguayan professional classes; cultured, a devout scientist, well-informed, widely read, competent in at least four European languages and at home in many great cities. Trained at the Universidad de la Republica, Montevideo, he spent his first postgraduate years in the Department of Physiology. He refined his vocational training in the Cardiology Department of Leeds, directed by the late Stanley Taylor, who considered Reyes to be his brightest research and clinical fellow. His best work was performed in cooperation with Fundación Procardias in Montevideo and during visits to the Department of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacology at the University of Natal, South Africa.

The perceived unimportance of South America to people in the Anglophone and central European countries meant that the value of his original contributions to medical science was not immediately recognised. During the last three decades Reyes published more than 200 papers and delivered innumerable lectures, many in collaboration with his friend Professor Perry Leary, initially in Natal and Montevideo and later in Ireland and Uruguay. He coordinated outstanding clinical research in hypertension and congestive heart failure in Germany and Italy with Guiseppe Crippa, and contributed to the theoretical and practical development of new drugs, including torasemide and noloimrole. His mastery of statistics, an uncommon endowment among clinical investigators, enabled him to participate in the design and analyses of the studies he coordinated or carried out personally.

Reyes was unafraid of criticism. A number of published papers first provoked heated debate but subsequently became incorporated in accepted therapeutic wisdom, usually with minimal reference to him and his collaborators. He was among the earliest investigators to postulate (and demonstrate) that ACE inhibitors could be effective in lowering 24-hour blood pressure when administered once daily, irrespective of plasma kinetics. He applied mathematical models to the urinary flows of water and solutes after the dosing of placebo or diuretics to healthy volunteers and identified rational modifications of diuretic use in patients. A mathematical model was also fitted to data from treated and untreated hypertensives, proving

that whereas the rate at which a drug lowers blood pressure, over time, depends on the drug class and the dose given, the final effect over 10-12 weeks tends to be much the same. He and his colleagues proved the concept that sub-diuretic doses of common diuretics exist; these doses gradually reduce raised blood pressure over a period of weeks with little or no disruption of fluid or electrolyte balance. The absence of mathematical literacy among the medical profession meant that these proofs of clinical theories did not receive the acclaim they deserved. The scientific community is indebted to him, *inter alia*, for the changes he promoted in diuretic use, saving many hypertensive patients from the untoward consequences of electrolyte imbalances caused by unnecessary use of high diuretic doses.

Reyes was motivated by strong principles of scientific honesty and was not diplomatic in dealing with simpler individuals or with those who did not share his enthusiasms. Many of his ideas would remain incomprehensible to colleagues and to a pharmaceutical industry that failed to appreciate how much could be gained by employing his expertise during the early phases of drug development. The exception was his contribution to the development of torasemide. He remained an independent voice to the end, quite uncorrupted by financial inducements.

Reyes was an active member of numerous committees that organised international meetings in both the Americas and in Europe and a key figure in at least one South African congress. He also served on the editorial boards of various important English and Spanish journals. Ever present at international congresses, Reyes was not active as a lecturer, much preferring to question speakers from the chair or the floor and extracting full value from informal discussions in coffee houses that he would rapidly pollute with cigarette smoke.

Xenophobic by instinct and intensely proud of his own cultural roots, he befriended and respected anyone scientifically reliable within his chosen academic and research fields. Ariel Reyes could be a difficult person to walk beside; highly intelligent, complicated, lucid and amusing, a loyal friend, he was also demanding of his family, colleagues and, with fatal consequences, himself. He drove himself in pursuit of only the best academic and scientific standards, such that his personal life was less than ideal and his sudden death probably inevitable.

His provocative presence will be missed at many future gatherings of clinical pharmacologists and cardiologists. His contributions to science will be recognised in due course. His friends and family, who loved him unconditionally, will remember him with great affection always.

Perry Leary