

Acad. Dr. Rafael Romualdo Gutiérrez Vega. In memoriam

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Dr. Rafael Gutiérrez Vega, an outstanding medical surgeon, undergraduate and postgraduate professor, researcher, and manager at the Hospital General de México and at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), was born in Cuautla, Morelos, on October 15, 1955, in a middle-class family. He developed his first studies in his hometown and from an early age learned to collaborate, like his three brothers, in his father's business activities. When they reached the age to start their professional studies, first his older brother and later him, both had to separate from the family to move and live independently in Mexico City (Fig. 1).

In 1973, the Dr. Gutiérrez Vega began his medical career at the Faculty of Medicine of the UNAM and from the beginning, his commitment with himself and with his studies and continuous learning made him an outstanding student, receiving his degree in Medical Surgeon in 1979. He began his residency in General Surgery at the Hospital General de México, and was later invited as a surgeon of the staff, where he developed most of his patient care, teaching, and research work. It was not long before his outgoing personality, knowledge, and the quality of his studies made him stand out during patient visits, case discussions, and clinical sessions.

Shortly after finishing his postgraduate studies, he enthusiastically faced the beginning of laparoscopic surgery, performing, together with a group of fellow surgeons, the first cholecystectomy with this technique

at the Hospital General de México¹. In addition, he implemented the nutritional support clinic, observing that the nutritional status of hospitalized patients influenced the clinical evolution of the patients; for this, evaluated the prognostic nutritional index².

Showing a strong vocation for teaching, and shortly after finishing his residency, he began to collaborate as a professor in the Department of Surgery at the Faculty of Medicine (Fig. 2), UNAM and also began his phase as a researcher, developing various studies on the effects of renal and hepatic ischemia – reperfusion and the effect of free radicals on tissues, following the line of research initiated during his stay at Mount Carmel Mercy Hospital in Detroit, Michigan in 1989^{3,4}. At the same time, he took on the task of integrating a multidisciplinary group to start, for the first time, a kidney transplant program at the Hospital General de México.

After being an adjunct professor of the postgraduate course in General Surgery for many years, the Dr. Gutiérrez Vega takes the direction of the course, where so many generations of young surgeons were trained in our hospital. His name was then proposed for the International Medical Knowledge Contest (CICoM), which is held among students from various national and international universities.

In 1994, he was invited to the Medical Directorate and later to the Medical Deputy General Director, Hospital General de México, as a manager, he had the opportunity to train in the field of medicine hitherto unknown to

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him: hospital administration. As was his custom, he overcame his inexperience with preparation, determination, and dedication. He used to be the first to arrive and the last to leave. The Dr. Gutiérrez Vega studied a master's degree in Senior Management, at the Pan-American Institute of Senior Business Management (IPADE).

Already more familiar with the structure and organization of the hospital, he had in mind to integrate a larger work group, that is why he created the Office of Assistants to the Director, non-existed until then, which, together with the hiring of more assistance personnel in the afternoon and evening favored the increase in patient care capacity. At the end of his term as Medical Deputy General Director, he returned fully to health-care activities.

Later, he was General Director of Arbitration at the Comisión Nacional de Arbitraje Médico (CONAMED), where he used all his medical and professional experience to contribute to the solution of the medical problems that were presented to the Commission. During this period at CONAMED, he published the most significant clinical cases, in medical journals, to expose the importance of the doctor-patient relationship in the medical act, the constant improvement in medical care, the consideration of bioethical aspects by the health personnel and knowledge of the regulations for the medical and surgical care of patients^{5,6}.

In 2014, the Dr. Gutiérrez Vega accepts the position of editor in chief of the Medical Journal of the Hospital General de México; one of his first changes was to publish the medical journal in the English language; in the editorial of volume 77 of our journal he explains and justifies the reasons for this change; which consisted of making it more competitive in the international arena⁷. For 5 years, he encouraged researchers from the Hospital General de México and the UNAM School of Medicine, among other health institutions, to publish their work in our medical journal (Fig. 3), always with the idea to improve scientific quality and its impact factor.

He was a member of the Medical Society of the Hospital General de México, where he participated as President of the Honor and Justice Commission in the period 2015-2017 (Fig. 4). At the end of 2018, as editor of the Medical Journal of the Hospital General de México, he signed the agreement, to continue publishing the research work of health professionals, with the Permanyer Mexico publishing house (Fig. 5).

Still young, in his most productive years, in the midst of his tenacious work as an editor in chief, a severe blow to his health forced him to gradually abandon his



Figure 1. Dr. Rafael Gutiérrez Vega, 1955-2022.

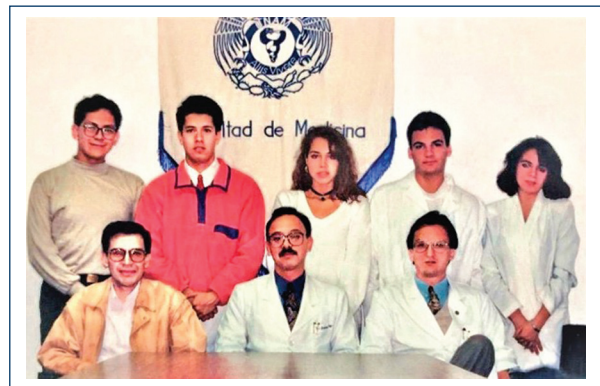


Figure 2. Seated from left to right: Dr. José Arturo Ortega Salgado, Dr. Rafael Gutiérrez Vega, Dr. Luis Padilla Sánchez. Standing from left to right: Dr. Carlos Agustín Rodríguez Paz, Dr. Eduardo E. Montalvo Jave, Dr. Adiola García Colín, Dr. Gregorio Quintero Beulo, Dr. Irma Carrillo Soto. Department of Surgery. Faculty of Medicine, UNAM.

activities to receive various treatments. When he visited the hospital during this time (the most difficult test he would face in his life), he did so with the best attitude, splendidly dressed, with the elegance that always characterized him. He published a large number of scientific articles, conferences, and presentations of scientific

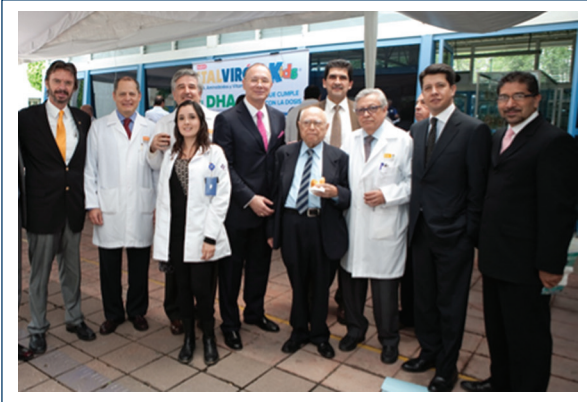


Figure 3. From left to right: Dr. Oscar Chapa Azuela, Dr. Alejandro Rodríguez Báez, Dr. José Humberto Garza Flores, Dr. Jimena Iberri, Dr. Rafael Gutiérrez Vega, Dr. Enrique Fernández Hidalgo, Dr. Luis Humberto Ortega León, Dr. Luis Miguel Cruz Melgar, Dr. Eduardo E. Montalvo Javé, Dr. Francisco Galindo González.



Figure 4. Dr. Rafael Gutiérrez Vega after rendering his report as editor of the Medical Journal of the General Hospital of Mexico, accompanied to his left by Dr. Sergio Cuevas Covarrubias President of the Medical Society of the General Hospital of Mexico, Dr. Eduardo Liceaga, 2020-2022 and to his right Dr. Octavio Amancio Chassin Treasurer of the Medical Society of the General Hospital of Mexico, Dr. Eduardo Liceaga, 2022-2023.

papers at national and international conferences, book chapters, and medical dissemination documents. In addition, he was a member of the most important medical and surgical associations and societies, including the Mexican Academy of Surgery, being an Emeritus member, also in the same category in the Mexican Association of General Surgery.

His last years were dedicated to enjoying the things, he was most passionate about: art in all its forms,

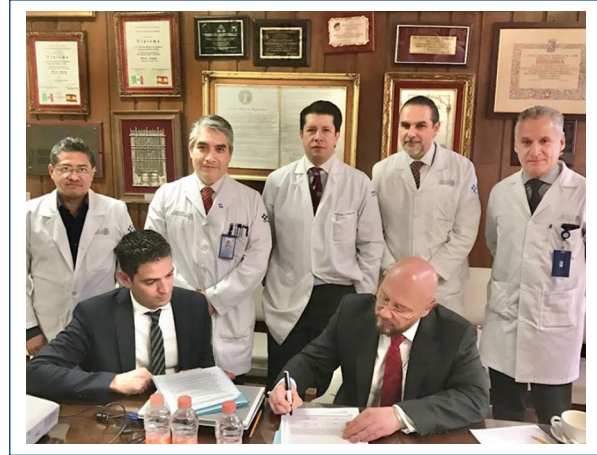


Figure 5. Signing of the agreement with the publishing house Permanyer México being president of the Medical Society of the General Hospital of Mexico, Dr. Eduardo Liceaga Dr. Arturo Larrazolo López (2019-2020) and editor in chief of the medical journal Dr. Rafael Gutiérrez Vega. With him at the signing from left to right: Dr. Marco Antonio Durán Padilla (2022-2023), Dr. Fiacro Jiménez Ponce, Dr. Eduardo Montalvo Jave (2015-2016), Dr. Adolfo Martínez Tovar and Frank García Lora representative of Permanyer México.

especially literature. He traveled a lot, strengthened family, and emotional ties; he enjoyed pleasant company and also enjoyed solitude; times of retreat and deep reflection. When the disease returned, he did too. He returned to the place and the family that saw him born. It seemed that when leaving, he wanted to take everything that he saw coming.

All of us who had the privilege of knowing Dr. Gutiérrez Vega will always remember him as a surgeon of excellence, with charisma and a deep humanitarian sense, but with a simple and cordial treatment, enthusiastic about knowledge and research and actively participating in academic exchanges. Inside and outside our hospital, he always contributes to reflection and improvement, with his point of view on excellence, surrounded by young people, students and doctors, whom he helped with their theses or accompanied them in their first steps in research and integrating them into their own projects.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Ethical disclosures

Protection of people and animals. The authors declare that no experiments were performed on humans or animals for this research.

Data confidentiality. The authors declare that no patient data appear in this article.

Right to privacy and informed consent. The authors declare that no patient data appear in this article.

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