

In memoriam: Ismael Mena, MD, 1928–2015

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Ismael Mena passed away on 15 February 2015 surrounded by his family in his home in Santiago, Chile. He had been the director of the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center Division of Nuclear Medicine, Professor of Radiological Sciences at UCLA School of Medicine from 1979 to 1995.

Ismael Mena was born in 1928 in Santiago, Chile, the eldest of nine children. His father was Professor of

Pathology in Santiago. He graduated from Universidad de Chile Medical School in 1954 and specialized in internal medicine, endocrinology at the Universidad Católica in Santiago. However, in 1957, he left Chile for California in order to be trained in nuclear medicine, a newly emerging specialty at that time. He joined Leslie R. Bennett at UCLA for 3 years and was definitively converted to nuclear medicine. He went back to Chile and founded the Nuclear Medicine Department at the Universidad Católica and also the Chilean Society of Nuclear Medicine. From his nuclear medicine department along with the neurology department, he collaborated with George Cotzias from the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in Brookhaven National Laboratory, New York, who established the L-DOPA treatment of Parkinson's disease. In 1970, Ismael Mena published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* a paper on the first cases of chronic manganese poisoning successfully treated in Chile by L-DOPA. Ultimately, he joined Dr. Cotzias's group in 1971 in Brookhaven to continue his research until 1973. He then joined UCLA School of Medicine and the Harbor UCLA Medical Center Nuclear Medicine Department which he directed until he retired in 1995. He retired from his UCLA academic position but not from nuclear medicine, since he returned to Chile and continued to practice at Clinica Las Condes, Santiago for almost 20 years.

During this rich career Ismael Mena received many awards from the SNM and from Latin-American scientific societies. He was particularly proud of having been awarded the title of "Doctor Honoris Causa" by the University of Auvergne in France in 2004. He published more than 250 scientific papers and 27 books and chapters. He was editor in chief of the ALASBIMN journal (Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociedades de Biología y Medicina Nuclear) from 1998 to

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2009 and transformed it into an online journal which was very innovative at that time. His contribution to nuclear medicine is impressive, ranging from the analysis of cardio-portal circulation in the 1960s to brain perfusion SPECT in neurology and psychiatry in more recent years. This last topic motivated him for almost 30 years. In particular, he developed a new software analysis and used it in new psychiatric indications.

Ismael Mena trained many nuclear physicians from the US but also from Europe, particularly from France, and of course

from Latin America. He was extremely dedicated to the progress of nuclear medicine and always had a communicating enthusiasm and strong determination in his endeavors which profoundly marked each of his collaborators. He will be greatly missed by all of them around the world.

Our sincere condolences go out to his beloved wife Maria de la Luz and all his family. He was indeed very proud of his family and felt very fortunate to spend much of his time with them during the last years of his life.