



BIOGRAPHY

Biography: Joel Faintuch, MD, PhD

Joel Faintuch¹

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Joel Faintuch, MD, PhD, is known in South America as the father of clinical nutrition. In Brazil in 1976, he authored one of the first books on parenteral and enteral nutrition. It was promptly adopted and utilized in Brazil, as well as in several other Latin American countries and ultimately, worldwide.

In 1975, Dr. Faintuch became a founding member of the pioneering Brazilian Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, and one of the first foreign members of the American Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASPEN, 1977) and the European Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ESPEN, 1979). During the next 20 years, he continuously investigated and published in the field of nutritional support. However, as a surgeon with a penchant for metabolism, he acknowledged that addressing solely undernutrition—however relevant and even life-saving—was ignoring an equally important patient population: the severely obese.

By the 1990s, Brazil became another country offering bariatric surgery to its citizens with morbid obesity. Shortly thereafter, the Brazilian Society of Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery (BSBMS) was founded in Sao Paulo. Dr. Faintuch served as the Executive Director for more than 3 years. He helped shape the first Bulletin, as well as the first conferences of the Society, including the International Federation for Surgery for Obesity (IFSO) World Congress that was held in Sao Paulo in 2001. Those experiences were the stimulus for Dr. Faintuch to shift his research towards obesity and bariatric surgery. Several years later, as a result of this career change, Dr. Faintuch co-authored and published two international books geared at respectively *Disabling Obesity* (2013) and *Obesity and Diabetes* (2015).

Dr. Faintuch has recently shifted his research energies to examining the gut microbiome (bacterial metagenomics). He believes that the fingerprinting of gut bacteria is progressively becoming recognized as a tool in the monitoring of the

response to bariatric as well as metabolic interventions. Additionally, Dr. Faintuch thinks that bacterial metagenomics has another advantage. It is the platform to other “omics” resources, such as metabolomics, proteomics, and lipidomics. Although not strictly connected to the intestinal microenvironment, such additional profiles are increasingly used to understand basic mechanisms of disease with potential diagnostic, therapeutic, and prognostic applications. They are considered by many to be central to the modern concepts of Molecular Pathology and Precision Medicine. Within this context, in Brazil in 2017, Dr. Faintuch edited a volume on the Microbiome. A larger publication on the Microbiome and Metabolome as well as one on Precision Medicine is currently in print, with an international publisher. Both are firsts in Latin America, and relatively unique worldwide, even though these are already highly active domains of research.

Dr. Faintuch also has an international presence. In 1979, he was awarded a grant by the International Union Against Cancer (Switzerland) to study pancreatic cancer at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. In 1981, he became an International Guest Scholar of the American College of Surgeons and visited universities in the USA and Canada. In 1982, he was the Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Limburg, Maastricht, The Netherlands. In 1995, he was invited by the late Prof. Robert Wesdorp to be the Visiting Professor at the Medical School of the Free University of Amsterdam. Dr. Faintuch has also maintained links with Japan as well, partly because Sao Paulo, Brazil, has the largest Japanese community outside of Japan. In this sense, he has served as a Guest Speaker at both the Japanese Society of Surgical Metabolism and Nutrition, and the International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity-Asia Pacific Chapter (IFSO-APC). He has also been invited to speak at several IFSO conferences.

For many reasons, the most groundbreaking trips for Dr. Faintuch were his trips to Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. Prof. Mervyn Deitel, who also started his career in the field of parenteral and enteral nutrition, was developing and expanding the bariatric program at St Joseph’s Hospital,

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University of Toronto. For Dr. Faintuch, Dr. Deitel became a mentor and a close personal friend.

Dr. Faintuch is currently a Senior Professor of Gastrointestinal Surgery in the Department of Gastroenterology, Sao Paulo University Medical School. He has developed a teaching curriculum and mentored over 40 candidates for Master or PhD degrees at the University of Sao Paulo. Dr. Faintuch has published over 250 articles cited at Pubmed/Medline and is the editor of eight books. His Google scholar “h” index is 31, and some of his most cited articles concern classic nutritional complications after bariatric surgery, such as Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome, protein-calorie malnutrition, and other deficiencies. He has also published many articles on other topics such as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, endoscopic double-balloon investigation of the excluded stomach after gastric bypass, as well as functional shifts in morbid obesity, involving gait, posture, and pulmonary function. He currently is an Associate Editor for the Journals *Obesity Surgery* and *Clinical Nutrition*, and he reviews articles for the *International Journal of Obesity*, the *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*, the *World Journal of*

Gastroenterology, *Artificial Organs*, and the *American Journal of Hypertension*.

Dr. Faintuch is an Honorary Member of three medical societies and has acted as advisor for educational agencies of two foreign governments. Since 2015, he is the vice-president of the Ethics in Research Committee (Internal Review Board), Hospital das Clinicas, which is the largest in Latin America.

Joel Faintuch lives in Sao Paulo, Brazil, with his wife Bluma, a scientist in the field of radiopharmacy. His older son Solomon lives in Boston, where he is Clinical Director of Interventional Radiology, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard Medical School. His younger son Daniel also resides in the USA (Cleveland), where he is the vice-president of a start-up company in the field of robotics. Currently, one of the most challenging activities for Joel, who is not sedentary but was also never a sportsman or a compulsive traveler, is managing to have family reunions, given the distance and busy schedules of him and all of his family members. Such a gathering often requires more planning than a large clinical trial!