

Mario A. Luna, M.D. The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (January 21, 1935 to November 9, 2008)

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On Sunday, November 9, 2008, Mario A. Luna, M.D. died in Houston, Texas at 73 years of age. With his passing the general and the head and neck pathology communities have lost a man whose enormous professional achievements were matched only by his humility, compassion, empathy and love of life and his family. Over the past 45 years Mario became a national and international leader in autopsy, infectious disease and head and neck tumor pathologies. He had also mentored, trained and taught several generations of young pathologists worldwide. Indeed, he was an ambassador of education for the institution he loved, M.D. Anderson.

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Mario was born and educated in Guadalajara, Mexico and subsequently immigrated to the USA in 1962. He entered the anatomic pathology program at the Cook County Hospital in Chicago and completed his residency training in 1964. He joined the Department of Pathology at M.D. Anderson Cancer Hospital as an assistant pathologist that same year and remained there until his death as a Professor of Pathology.

A talented and thoughtful morphologist with a deep understanding of the role of the pathologist in cancer management, he practiced and researched oncologic and autopsy pathology with an almost missionary zeal. Mario, as chief of autopsy pathology always found the time to console and comfort grieved family members of deceased cancer patients. An extremely sensitive and fatherly figure, he had no reservation in sparing the trainees' time from the not-so-popular call for an autopsy, by performing it himself. This and other acts of generosity and kindness endeared him to countless young fellows and trainees.

One of Mario's enduring legacies was to personally perform and supervise grossing and processing head and neck pathology surgical resections; he designed diagrams and illustrations that simplified the complex anatomy of head and neck resections for trainees and fellows. This, and other similar demanding personal participation in service and training, underscore his emphasis on the importance of correlating gross and microscopic findings to the management of cancer patients a practice that continues today at M.D. Anderson. This approach was the foundation of Mario's seminal contributions to head and neck, and especially salivary gland pathology.

Mario unselfishly supported, encouraged, and collaborated with numerous pathologists locally, nationally, and internationally. He authored more than 250 articles,

numerous book chapters and gave countless lectures and seminars in the US and worldwide. He also devoted considerable time to leading and assisting pathology organizations in Europe, South America and Texas. He was president of the Houston Society of Pathology from 1993 to 1995 and the Latin American Pathology Society from 1992 to 1994.

Considering all his professional accomplishments, Mario will be best known and remembered for his kindness, unselfishness, and compassion for mankind; he touched many lives throughout his life. His generosity and genuine fellowship were clearly evident at his death when so many individuals from diverse areas of the institution came to mourn him after learning of his death. He always saw the goodness in people and never dwelled on nor exposed their deficiencies and weaknesses.

Mario always found the time to enjoy the nonprofessional aspects of life. He was an avid reader of history and politics and enjoyed dancing, music, food and good wine. As numerous and diverse as Mario's impact and activities have been, those of us who worked closely with him will remember his enthusiasm, kindness, loyalty and self-effacing nature. No matter how critical, competitive, or unsettling a situation could be, he was the mediating factor.

Mario's love and dedication to this profession were surpassed only by his devotion to his family. He is survived by his loving wife of 46 years, Guadalupe, three grown sons, Michael, Jorge and Albert, two daughters-in-law, Micki (Jorge's wife) and Bertha (Albert's wife) and three grandchildren (Cristian, Gabrielle and Isabelle). When Mario passed away on November 9, 2008, we lost an once-in-a-lifetime good man.