

## Obituary



Our Friend and colleague Álvaro José Romanha passed away on March 16th, 2020 in Belo Horizonte, MG-Brazil. He was born on January 31st of 1951, in Colatina, Espírito Santo State in Brazil and was married to Tarcilia Frechiani (Dedé) with whom he had three children (Camilo, Bernardo and Mateus). Alvaro was a pharmacist and a biochemist who graduated at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in 1972. He completed his specialization course in Biochemistry and Immunology at the Institute of Biological Sciences at UFMG, in 1976. He achieved in 1982 his Doctorate's degree in Biochemistry and Immunology at UFMG, under the supervision of Professor Aníbal Pereira. He spent two years from 1982 to 1984 as a Postdoctoral Fellow at Wellcome Research Laboratories in the United Kingdom under the supervision of Professor Winston E. Gutteridge.

He became Associate Professor of Medical Parasitology at the Pharmacy Department of UFMG between 1974 and 1975. In the meantime, he was also Professor of Biochemistry and Cell Biology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais between 1972-1976. He also worked from 1989 to 2009 as a Visiting professor in the post-graduate program in Biochemistry, Immunology and Parasitology of UFMG. He became a CAPES Senior Visiting Professor and worked from 2011 to 2014 at the graduate program in Biotechnology and Biosciences of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). He retired as a full researcher at the Research Center René Rachou (CPqRR).

He worked at CPqRR - FIOCRUZ in Belo Horizonte from 1971 to 2010 where he created and organized in 1984, the Laboratory of Parasitology and Parasite Biochemistry. He brilliantly implemented the isoenzyme electrophoresis technique for the characterization of *Trypanosoma cruzi*. He was in partnership with Professor Zigman Brener, an international reference in Chagas' disease, with whom he started research on Experimental Chemotherapy against *T. cruzi*. He also implemented in the 1990s, in partnership with Andrew Simpson, the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) technique and they developed together research in Parasite Molecular Biology with special emphasis on *Trypanosoma*, *Leishmania* and *Schistosoma mansoni*, molecular studies of the parasite-host interaction, proteomics, and so on. He improved the performance of this laboratory with collaborations of researchers from several Universities in Brazil and abroad. Among the numerous projects he coordinated, those with impactful outcome included the FIOCRUZ - PDTIS platforms for Proteomic studies and the Pre-Clinical Trials of Anti-*Trypanosoma cruzi* Drug Screening. Álvaro also participated to the foundation of the Research Network of Natural Products for Neglected Diseases - *ResNet NPND* in 2011 alongside Professor Thomas Schmidt of the University of Münster.

Throughout his productive scientific career, Álvaro supervised 29 master's students, 18 doctoral students and published 150 scientific articles in scientific peer-reviewed journals and 3 book chapters. He coordinated the Association of Employees of Fiocruz (ASOFC), at Minas Gerais, from 1989 to 1992 and during this period, he fought in defense of the rights of CPqRR employees. Between 1990 and 1991, he held the position of president of the Brazilian Society of Protozoology (SBPz) and nine years later, he successfully organized the XXVII Annual Meeting of Basic Research in Chagas Disease. He also coordinated the Advisory Committee on Biological Sciences and Biotechnology of FAPEMIG from 1998 to 2000. Right after in 2001, he was the coordinator of the Research Ethics Committee on Human Beings of CPqRR until 2005. During the same period (2002-2005), he was elected member of the CNPq

Advisory Committee on Morphology, Microbiology, Immunology and Parasitology. He was an advisory member of the Minas Biotechnology Network (2004-2006) and a member of the Hemominas Curator Council (2006-2008). He was also a member of the Chamber of Scientific Advising on Biological Sciences at FAPEAM (2006-2009), a deputy director of CPqRR (2002-2005) and the director of CPqRR (2005-2009). He retired with the top level of the CNPq Scientific Productivity scholarship (Level 1A).

He also received honors from the 5th Brazilian Symposium on Medicinal Chemistry - BrazMedChem in 2010 at Federal University of Ouro Preto and at CPqRR. Moreover, the XXII Congress of the Brazilian Society of Parasitology and the III Parasitology Meeting of Mercosul in Florianópolis in 2013 honored him president. Álvaro was known as a simple, accessible, critical, ethical and caring person and the students remarkably remember him for his clarity, his discipline and his concern for the safety of students in the laboratory.

Mario Steindel