

EDITORIAL

SIR SALVADOR MONCADA

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Professor Salvador Moncada, Director of the University of London's Institute Wolfson of Biomedical Research and who is a friend of Colombia, has just received, the 31th of December 2009, the appointment from the Queen Isabel II as a "Gentleman of the Queen" (Knight Bachelor) for his services to science. This distinction changes the title of the Latin-American scientist into *Sir Moncada*. The transcendental recognition is due to the extraordinary labour that our good friend Salvador has done along his career in favour of science. This distinction for Salvador is further meritorious, considering that our friend is not an Englishman, as he was born on December 3rd, 1944 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

The "Knight Bachelor" is a formal acknowledgement that the United Kingdom grants since the 13th century, to prominent figures that have been distinguished for their valuable contribution to the society. The list of prominent figures who has also received the Knight title in the category of science, includes names such as Isaac Newton and Alexander Fleming, two great scientists of the universal history. The recently entitled Sir Salvador Moncada is the most important Latin-American scientist and one of the 100 authors most cited in the scientific world in all times, for the numerous research that he has developed. For example, he was the first to demonstrate that nitric oxide is a substance released by the vascular endothelium that maintains the functional integrity of the cardiovascular system, in addition to unravel what was the route for its cellular synthesis. It was thanks to Moncada that the mechanism of action of aspirin was revealed and the discovery that vascular wall endothelial cells produce prostacyclin and he also described their vasodilatory and antiplatelet properties.

Sir Moncada received the award *Prince of Asturias* for Technical and Scientific Research in 1990. This

prize is given since 1981 to individuals, teams or institutions whose discoveries represent a significant contribution to the progress of humanity in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, earth sciences and space, as well as techniques and related technologies related to them. He also received the highest award in Medicine from the Royal Dutch Academy of the Arts and Sciences.

In 1982 and again in 1998, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize in medicine, however, none of the occasions was he awarded, a fact that has sparked controversy in the international scientific community, as he is considered worthy of the award, especially because all scientists recognize him as the discoverer of Nitric Oxide, whose description in the cardiovascular system motivated the Nobel Prize of Medicine in 1998.

Sir Salvador Moncada completed his secondary education at the National Institute of San Salvador, El Salvador, since 1957 to 1961. During 1962 to 1970 he studied at the Faculty of Medicine, University of El Salvador, where he obtained the title of Doctor of Medicine and Surgery. In the period between 1971 and 1973 he studied in the Surgeons' Royal College, University of London, Department of Pharmacology. In 1983 he obtained the title of doctor in sciences in the University of London.

Among the areas of research in which his contributions have been fundamental it is worth to mention those related with the pharmacological effects of vasoactive substances, specially nitric oxide and products of the metabolism of arachidonic acid and its role in the physiology and pathology of the cardiovascular system and in inflammation. His pioneering contributions in the description of the behaviour and interaction of platelets with the vascular wall and their role in

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thrombosis and atherosclerosis represent a milestone in medical science. Among his patents is worth to mention the use of prostacyclin in different clinical situations.

Dr. Moancada is currently a member of the Royal College of Physicists in the United Kingdom and in the United States is part of the National Academy of Sciences. He is married to Princess Marie-Esmeralda of Belgium, since April 1998. They have two children: Alexandra and Leopold. In April last year Salvador, Princess Esmeralda and her children visited us in Bogotá to attend the Symposium for the 15th anniversary of the Pan American College of endothelium, an

institution to which he has provided ongoing support, as well as to other institutions in Colombia.

Our most sincere congratulation for this honouring to Salvador - Member of the International Scientific Committee of our MED-Journal, honouring that make us proud and honours us as well. May this serve our permanent claim that Latin-America talent indeed exists. May this tribute to the scientific life of Sir Moncada offers an example of what is possible to achieve, to our young medical doctors and students in the biomedical sciences.