

Aniceto Baltasar Torrejón, pioneer surgeon in bariatric surgery

Carlos Serra Díaz

Hospital Virgen de los Lirios. Alcoy. Alicante. Spain.

E-mail: carlosserradiaz@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This manuscript shows the importance an trajectory of D. Aniceto Baltasar for bariatric surgery in Spain and worldwide.

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- Aniceto Baltasar Torrejón
- Pioneer
- SECO
- IFSO

Dr. Aniceto Baltasar Torrejón was born in **1944** in Guadalupe (Cáceres). He studied High School in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid) and graduated in Medicine and Surgery at the Complutense University of Madrid in **1967**. He entered the American specialist training system (Foreign) and attended the General Surgery Residency at The Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn, New York from **1969-1974**. On 07-14-1974 he won by competitive examination the position of Head of General Surgery Service at the Hospital Virgen de los Lirios de Alcoy. Thus, at the age of 30, he became one of the youngest Head of General Surgery in Spain. The beginnings were not easy, since he had a team of surgeons with limited training at that time. Later on, young doctors arrived, all with spanish MIR training, who later became part of the Department.

In spite of this this, he began to perform surgeries, many of them complex and novel for the time in Spain. He created an ICU as well equipped as his NYC Service, managed directly by the members of the staff, achieving a quality postoperative follow-up for those years.

The city of Alcoy had a School of Nursing that was very important for the endowment of the Hospital. A group of 11 nurses were trained in two courses in thoracic nursing, with ventilators and the routine use of central lines (more than 900 in two years) was started, and venotomies were abandoned.

Trained in Thoracic and Vascular Surgery, he began



complex and novel interventions that in many cases were done for the first-time in Spain such as 1) First published in Spain to reduce cholesterol, 2) Pancreatectomies preserving the duodenum, 3) First urinary double-continent Koch ileostomies, etc.

He performed the first Bariatric Surgery published in Spain in 1977 which the surgical journals refused to publish and was finally included in the Medical Journal of the Jiménez Díaz Foundation of Madrid

in 1980, thus demonstrating that in those years, complex General, Vascular and Thoracic Surgery procedures were possible in a regional Hospital. In the 90's it was the first Regional Hospital and the sixth Hospital with more publications only behind the University hospitals.

He co-founded in 1980 with Dr. Ballesta from Barcelona the "Video Magazine of Surgery" (VRC) and the European Association of Medical Cinema, thus betting on the wide diffusion of surgical techniques edited on video where he published 25 contributions. For this, he had the invaluable collaboration for the recording and editing of videos of the Nursing Supervisor of the Surgical floor. Until then, surgical interventions could only be prepared with classic books and Atlas of Surgery.

He won in Motril the Golden Aesculapius Award of Medical Cinema in 1984 with a TERE (Thrombo-Eversion Retrograde Endarterectomy) operation, a technique that he performed routinely in the aortic and femoral area and rarely used in Spain.

From **1986-2008**, for 22 uninterrupted years, he held the Alicante Surgery Meeting in Alcoy, which was attended by surgeons from all over the community and clinical cases of patients were presented and discussed, contributing to fostering relationships between all surgeons of the 14 local and general hospitals. In 1995 the 1st Meeting of the Valencian Vascular Society was also held in Alcoy.

The Surgical Service of Alcoy Hospital occupied for several years the first positions according to the number of publications in the Spanish surgery magazines, emphasizing an unusual aspect such as the communication of postoperative complications.

In **1982**, the Ostomy Association of Alcoy (AOA) and of Spain (AOE) was created in Alcoy. All, without exception, the 93 ostomates patients of the Service, were trained by the patients themselves in the pre and postoperative period. And we know of no other national center that has done so voluntarily. He broadcasted a very successful film on Antena-3 TV in 2003 about this. In addition, 5

more films were shown in national TVE on General and Obesity Surgery subjects.

In **1992**, he attended the American Congress of Surgery in Chicago and presented the Video "Aortic Resection for Abdominal Liposarcoma with Vascular Reconstruction" that won the Award and was included in the permanent Video Library of the American College of Surgeons. In 2002, the American College of Surgeons itself requested again its presentation at that year's Congress in San Francisco. In addition, a 2nd case resection was done for a recurrence in the pelvis with transfemoral revascularization of arterial (prosthetic) and venous bypass (with inverted saphenous vein) that is also included in the American Video Library of Surgery

In **1994**, he performed the 1st open Duodenal Switch in Spain and in subsequent years he gathered the largest national series and the 3rd worldwide.

In **1995** he performed the first Pericardial Window by Thoracoscopy in Spain due to a neoplastic effusion, published in the Video Journal of Surgery (VRC).

In **1996**, he obtained the Accreditation of the Service to train Resident Surgeons via MIR, and also that SECO was accepted within the AEC (Asociación Española de Cirujanos)

In **1996** he visited San Diego, CA as the world's 1st observer to see the 1st surgeon Dr. Alan Wittgrove who performed the 1st Laparoscopic Gastric Bypass in the world. In 1997, he performed and presented the 1st Spanish Lap Gastric bypass at the 1st National Meeting of SECO in Granada. Dr. Wittgrove accepted in **2007** a Dr. Baltasar variation of the technique by doing the insertion of a ring stapler directly through the wound instead of the use of a 33 mm trocar.

In **1996**, he founded SECO and was its 1st President for 7 years. The SECO logo was inspired by Sancho (a morbidly obese) and D. Quixote (skinny) and drawn by our operating room secretary, and winner of several of the Alcoy "Cartel de Festes" contest. He directed the Society for 7 years and received the title of Honorary President of SECO in

Zaragoza on **10-10-2002**.

In **2000**, he performed the 1st Laparoscopic Duodenal Switch, 1st in Spain and Europe and 2nd worldwide.

In **2000** he published the Book on Obesity Surgery and it was re published in 2017.

In 2002, he was appointed President of IFSO, being the 1st Spanish president, thus opening the way for other Spanish surgeons who followed him later.

In **2003**, he held the 1st IFSO World Congress in Spain (Salamanca). The 2nd was in Madrid in 2021.

In **2004** he performed the first laparoscopic operation for diabetes. A man referred by the University of Minnesota, whose sister had already undergone open surgery and underwent laparoscopic intestinal diversion surgery at San Jorge Sanatorium with excellent metabolic results. In **2004** he wrote a historical article that is a world reference on obesity "More than 1000 years ago "Sancho the Fat" lost his Leon kingdom due to morbid obesity. The king was treated in Cordoba, lost extraweight and regained his kingdom again.

In **2008**, he initiated bariatric surgery for obese children and adolescents (CLONA in spanish), performing a Sleeve Gastrectomy in a 10-year-old child from Oregon, USA with a Blount's disease. Followed for 12 years he has reached a normal growth and has lost all extra weight.

In **2011**, he founded the Revista Bariátrica & Metabólica Iberoamericana (BMI-Journal), which in **2016** became the official journal of SECO and the Spanish Society for the Study of Obesity (SEEDO). More than 80 surgeons national and foreigners have visited Alcoy Hospital to learn the latest news on Bariatric Surgery.

He is proud of three main facts: The first is that the hospital manager accepted that the nomination of his sucesor was made by vote of all members of the Alcoy Surgery Service. Posteriorly, he gained the charge by competitive examination.

The second is that in **2012** Dr. Baltasar was selected for the ABS (American Bariatric Society) National Award and placed 2nd in Orlando, FL. Only Dr. Scopinaro, as a foreign surgeon, has ever received this Award.

The 3rd is that only 3 surgeons have left the Service

in 35 years, one to become head of surgery in other hospital, and the others to return to hospitals in their hometowns.

In **2015**, Dr Baltasar was appointed as member of the Royal Academy of Medicine of the Valencian Community.

He always wanted to share his experiences, both to communicate the success and to a greater extent to share failures and complications from which every surgeon learns more. Thus, he has his entire CV indexed, scanned and with internet links available to anyone who wants to consult it, with 835 conferences worldwide, 1634 bariatric procederes, 102 films and 390 national and international publications and he has shared it and presented at the Alcoy Hospital, at the Library of the Alcoy City Council, at the Industrial Circle of the city of Alcoy and to a multitude of surgeons who have requested it and with whom he currently maintains very close contact. He has published 9 web pages with his films with description of Gastric bypass, Duodenal Switch, and Sleeve Gastrectomy. Over the years he shared and transmitted his extensive experience, his teachings, his drive and his impetus to all of us who have had the opportunity and the fortune to work with him. To be able to do this, in a surgical service great expertise and also great generosity is needed, thus achieving the General Surgery Service of Alcoy Hospital, a cutting-edge service that has taken the name of Alcoy to Surgery Congresses worldwide. From **1974-2009** he formed a very talented Surgery Service, with surgeons endowed with a high human and professional level. Their collaboration contributed to perform high level laparoscopic surgery. With them he created a team of bariatric surgery and advanced laparoscopy, hepatic and biliopancreatic surgery and breast oncoplasty of the highest level that endures today. And it is a challenge for the future that all this activity is to be maintained.

Dr. Aniceto Baltasar can be very proud and boast of transmitting this legacy that is still in force today and that forces those of us who have collected it to try to share it with the generations that will come after us.

In July 2022, coinciding with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Virgen de los Lirios Hospital in Alcoy, Dr. Baltasar has received the honor of using his name to the hospital's Assembly Hall and I would like to share this recognition based on a successful personal and professional trajectory that all the members of the Surgery Service feel so proud.



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