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ERNST H. BEUTNER, (AUGUST 27, 1923 – JUNE 10, 2013)

Ana Maria Abreu Velez

Georgia Dermatopathology Associates, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

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(MSH, AMAV).

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Corresponding author: Ana Maria Abreu Velez, MD PhD

abreuvelez@yahoo.com

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Sir

I write to honor our memory of Ernst H. Beutner, Ph.D., a distinguished leader in dermatology and immunology; a mentor, gentleman, husband and father, an outstanding supervisor and true light in this world for many years.

I do not write to characterize his outstanding scientific achievements; these are well known. For those desiring to learn more about his scientific legacy, please refer to the links provided below.

When I first began to communicate professionally with Dr. Beutner, I was a physician scientist from outside the United States, working to medically and scientifically characterize a new form of endemic pemphigus foliaceus. Specifically, the disease is geographically centered in the area of El Bagre, Colombia, South America (El Bagre EPF). Because my work represented an attempt to characterize a new disease, many of my requests for funding, as well as my early scientific results were not easily accepted. I contacted Dr. Beutner, a well established international expert in autoimmune bullous diseases; I then sent some patient biopsies and a summary of my initial work to him at Beutner Laboratories in Buffalo, New York, USA. One day, I received a return call from Dr. Beutner, telling me that he wanted to review further data on El Bagre EPF and meet in the future. Indeed, in one of the next meetings of the Society for Investigative Dermatology, a senior gentleman approached me without a name badge; he had white hair, deep blue eyes and an amazing smile. He asked me to explain my poster to him, and asked many excellent scientific questions. He told me one beautiful, truly funny joke. I noticed that some people were taking photographs of this gentleman, and asked someone why this was happening. I was then informed that he was indeed Dr. Beutner. I remember being absolutely amazed that such a humble, funny man could also be such an amazing scientific genius!

Dr. Beutner encouraged me by sharing how he went through similar experiences seeking funding and publishing success when he attained groundbreaking immunodermatology discoveries with Dr. Robert Jordon and others. He related that small journals initially published much of the work, because these journals judged the work itself and were not afraid to challenge the prevailing scientific dogma and paradigms. He

reminded me that Christopher Columbus was once on the verge of a crew mutiny because he had put absolute trust in his studies of earth and star movements. He also reminded me of Sir Isaac Newton under the apple tree, where a simple observation changed our understanding of gravitational forces. He provided many other examples. I listened to his wisdom.

When we met by telephone or in person, Dr. Beutner never asked me how many indexed publications I had attained, how many professional committees I had served on and so forth. He consistently asked the same initial questions, specifically: 1) How are you?; 2) How is your daughter?; and 3) How are your patients?. These questions reminded me of his priorities and values, ie, people in first place, and science and medicine to serve them in a respectful second place.

In July, 2010 at Beutner Laboratories we sat together comparing immunofluorescence and immunohistochemistry findings in autoimmune bullous diseases (Fig. 1). He listened and analyzed my slides. I recall presenting some different findings in selected diseases to those previously described by him, and demonstrating my data. He never stated that I was "wrong". He would listen and observe each slide carefully. He would think deeply and encourage me to keep working hard on the data.



Figure 1. Dr Ernest H. Beutner, the Father of Immunodermatology of Boytner labs, Buffalo, NY (July) with Dr Ana Maria Abreu-velez.

I saw a man at an advanced age, working long hours on our research project and demonstrating a phenomenal level of interest and commitment.

Dr. Beutner's last words to me were to the effect that "I pass the torch on to you". I recall telling him, "I am not you, Dr. Beutner; but I can assure you that I will do my best to continue your work and honor your legacy with other colleagues. We will try our best to serve future generations, and especially to help the patients". I believe all members of our profession now have Dr. Beutner's torch, and thus should try our best to be honest and ethical scientists and laboratory physicians. As Dr. Beutner and I discussed, we all believe we might know the truth about a given biologic process or disease, but other findings will emerge over time and God will certainly have the last word. Given history, it is pretentious to believe otherwise. Great scientists know that natural system phenomology is consistent in revealing truth, but only when we observe carefully and honestly.

In summary, my sincere thanks to Dr. Beutner's family and to all at Beutner Laboratories for allowing all of us to share his life. It is rare to have the opportunity to learn from, and to know such a wonderful giant of a man. I believe I can speak for all who knew him in stating that we will always miss him, and deeply respect him.

Websites:

http://www.buffalonews.com/20130613/ernst_h_beutner_renowned_dermatology_researcher.html

http://wiki.verkata.com/en/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:Articles_for_creation/Ernst_H._Beutner

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