

*In memoriam*

**Dr. Enrique Pimentel**

**1928–1995**

It is with deep sadness that we inform the readers of *Critical Reviews in Oncogenesis* of the untimely demise of Dr. Enrique Pimentel, founding editor of this journal. Dr. Pimentel has been an example and inspiration to all of us. The modest-yet-heartfelt *Festschrift* on his legacy that follows includes the few thoughts that we could put in writing amid the consternation and denial we are still suffering after his sudden death.

Born in Caracas, Venezuela, on April 7, 1928, to a distinguished and accomplished Venezuelan family, Dr. Pimentel completed his medical training in the specialty of endocrinology at the age of 25, receiving M.D. degrees from both the Universities of Madrid and Caracas. He pursued a very productive academic career in biomedicine and was honored with the appointment as Professor Emeritus of General Pathology and Pathophysiology at the School of Medicine of the Central University of Venezuela. During his multifaceted tenure at the latter university, he was Director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine and Founder and Director of the National Center of Human and Experimental Genetics. Always peripatetically active, he was also Chief of the Endocrinology Division of the Central Hospital of the Armed Forces in Caracas.

Perennially inquisitive, Dr. Pimentel has left us countless testaments of his encyclopedic dominion of medicine, particularly of basic oncology, and the fruits of his intellectual endeavors are evidenced in the pages of over 100 scientific papers and 7 books. The three-volume set entitled *Handbooks of Growth Factors*, which received laudatory reviews by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, stands as his most prominent recent written contribution.

Dr. Pimentel was elected President of the Venezuelan National Academy of Medicine in 1994. He was a relentless fighter for social justice and fair access to health care and education. His exemplary leadership and desire to contribute to the development of medicine and science found further fertile grounds in the Venezuelan Association for the Advancement of Science and the “José María Vargas” Foundation of which he was General Secretary and President, respectively. He was an active member of over 30 professional societies in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Spain, England, Germany, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Egypt, and the United States.

Numerous governments and scientific and cultural organizations granted their highest accolades to Dr. Pimentel. The Presidents of the Republic of Ecuador and of the Federal Republic of Germany honored him with the “Orden Nacional al Mérito” (National Order of Merit) and the “Grosse Verdienstkreuz” (Great Cross to the Merit), respectively. Among the many awards he received from the Republic of Venezuela were the National Science Award, the “Francisco de Miranda,” “José María Vargas,” “Andrés Bello,” “General Rafael Urdaneta,” and “Libertador” Orders. Dr. Pimentel received the Biographee of the Year Award of the Historical Preservations of America Institute. He was named

Man of the Year in 1990 and was listed among the “Five Thousand Personalities of the World” and in the “International Book of Honor” by the American Biographical Institute. The International Biographical Centre in Cambridge, England, listed him among the “Men of Achievement” and the “International Who’s Who of Intellectuals”.

Nevertheless, his students and peers remember him as mild-mannered, humble, and a persistently active scholar with the naivete and curiosity that characterize brilliant thinkers. A Renaissance man, he was fluent in Spanish, English, French, and German, an expert in classical music, and a Maecenas of the arts. He was also President of the Humboldt Cultural Association, member of the General Counsel of the Alliance Française, and Director of the “Humberto García Arocha” Medical Library, among many other cultural endeavors.

A family man and unconditional friend, he always made us feel at home. I miss him and I am grateful for his *exordium vitae et almae*.

I am glad to announce that his son Gonzalo Pimentel, M.D., will continue to bring you *Critical Reviews in Oncogenesis*. Like Sancho Panza after the death of his idealistic Don Quixote de La Mancha, he will strive to exalt this aliquot of his father’s legacy.

**Roberto Patarca, M.D., Ph.D.**

Co-editor, *Critical Reviews in Oncogenesis*  
Scientific Director,  
E.M. Papper Laboratory of Clinical Immunology  
University of Miami School of Medicine

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Professor Pimentel was one of the founding members of the International Academy of Tumor Marker Oncology in Vienna in 1984. Since that time he has been Vice President of this organization and since 1986 Central and South American Editor of the *Journal of Tumor Marker Oncology*. Enrique Pimentel, with his broad knowledge in oncology, has contributed significantly to the growth and development of the International Academy of Tumor Marker Oncology and its activities. He shared his energy and scholarship with all of us and was a most trusted friend.

His loss will be deeply felt by all organizations in which he held leadership positions. Our sympathy is offered to his wonderful wife Emmy and his family. While we are shrouded by the sadness of his death, we should celebrate the accomplishments of his life.

**J. V. Klavins, M.D., Ph.D.**

President  
International Academy of Tumor Marker  
Oncology

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It is difficult for me to understand why Enrique at the peak of his creativity had to leave us forever. It is more than sadness and sorrow that I feel for the loss of a friend. I came to know Enrique in 1982 when he participated as invited speaker at the first International Conference on Human Tumor Markers. He was a gentleman, a scholar and a grand seigneur who helped the International Academy of Tumor Marker Oncology where he acted as vice-president since 1984.

His contributions to our Academy were most valuable, and therefore it was hard to explain to the delegates of the 12th International Conference on Human Tumor Markers that took place in New York, June 11–14, 1995, that our vice-president had passed away by a sudden death. We will memorialize our friend Enrique in an extensive anthology in the next issue of the *Journal of Tumor Marker Oncology*.

**Georg D. Birkmayer, M.D., Ph.D.**

Secretary General,  
International Academy of Tumor Marker Oncology  
Vienna, Austria

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I was saddened to learn of the death of my friend and colleague, Enrique Pimentel, M.D. I had come to know Enrique extremely well over the past 2 decades. I had been a Visiting Professor in Oncology at his Center in Caracas and was a participant in many of the International Conferences of Tumor Markers, in which he played a major role.

Enrique was a very intense person whose life's work centered around problems in biomarkers and oncogenes, with particular attention to their role in carcinogenesis, as well as in cancer control. This interest was culminated when he inaugurated the journal *Critical Reviews in Oncogenesis*. Thanks to Enrique, this journal has been a scientific source of information for many of us who work in the field.

The greatest tribute to Enrique would be the perpetuity of "his" journal.

His leadership worldwide is going to be greatly missed. However, the imprints of the work ethic, honor, and hope that he left with us and his family will unquestionably sustain us all.

**Henry T. Lynch, M.D.**

Professor and Chairman, and  
Professor of Medicine  
Creighton University School of Medicine  
Omaha, Nebraska

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Words fail me to express my shock and sadness upon learning of the death of Dr. Enrique Pimentel. We have lost a wonderful friend, an untiring worker in the field of cancer, and a dedicated propounder of key and cogent information in this field. I shall always remember Enrique's pleasant and friendly personality and his warmth as a host and colleague. To his wife and family, his loss must be indescribable. We feel and sympathize deeply with them.

**Avery A. Sandberg, M.D., D.Sc.**  
Senior Medical Director  
The Genetics Center & The Cancer Center  
Scottsdale, Arizona

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I greatly appreciate Dr. Roberto Patarca's invitation to contribute a letter in memory of Dr. Enrique Pimentel, who died suddenly at the peak of his career.

Dr. Pimentel, his wife Emmy, and daughter Beatriz have been friends of mine for many years. They were a closely knit family, and the father was proud that this daughter was the designer of the cover page of his journal, *Critical Reviews in Oncogenesis*. It has been an honor for me to be a member of the Editorial Board of the *Critical Reviews* created by Dr. Pimentel since its inception in 1986.

Dr. Pimentel, a world-renowned physician and scientist, was licensed and received his doctorate at the early age of 25. He has many original publications and wrote several books and book articles. Dr. Pimentel organized and chaired various International Congresses. He was a member of numerous National and International professional societies and also received many honors and medals.

The biomedical world has lost a great editor, scientist, and outgoing personality. I have lost a close personal friend and he will be deeply missed but remembered always for his warmth and openness.

**Georg F. Springer, M.D., D.Sc.hc.**  
Professor and Head,  
Heather Margaret Bligh Cancer Research Laboratories  
Finch University of Health Sciences/  
The Chicago Medical School

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Enrique was the only person I knew who could give an invited lecture on oncogenes, half an hour later hold a discussion on the tonal qualities of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and still later in a party recite from memory the "*Habe nun, ach! Philosophie, Juristerei und Medizin. . .*" with which Goethe opened the Faust Tragedy. His forerunner, don Juan de Pimentel, was a famous governor and chronicler of Venezuela during the Spanish colonial rule. Spain was thus Enrique's *madre patria*, and there he went to study under Professor Marañón. His mother's family name was Malaussena, and Enrique was both

proud and amused when he visited the *Rue Malaussena* in Marseille. He was also a Germanophile, perhaps because he married Emmy Gehrenbeck, or perhaps the other way around, or both. Born to a patrician Venezuelan family, Enrique felt comfortable with all sorts of refinement and culture. He was competent in Spanish, English, French, and German, but perhaps the language that reached him most deeply was music. The home studio where he worked on his books and journals was also the seat of one of the best collections of recorded music in the country. His friends named it *The Theater of the Two Richards* (for Wagner and Strauss, of course) and there, after the elaborate delights of Emmy's cuisine, we mixed until sunrise cognac with *Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond*. Oftentimes Enrique had to resort to *Après un Rêve* and the like to rescue his friend Marcel Roche from the demolishing effects of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. I once invited Enrique to an all-Hugo Wolf recital by Fisher-Dieskau in Salzburg; for the two of us, discrete nonbelievers, that was the closest thing to heaven.

However, for all his cultivated taste and unusual talent for science, Enrique was an extremely human and candid person. He loved to dance, and had a frank and almost childish wit and sense of humor. His dedication to the creation, storage, and dissemination of knowledge was enormous and so were his affection for his family, his intimate concern for his friends, and his exquisite sense for elevated beauty.

**Horacio Vanegas, M.D., Ph.D.**

Former Director,

Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas (IVIC)