



EASL International Recognition Award Recipient 2019: Prof. Flair José Carrilho

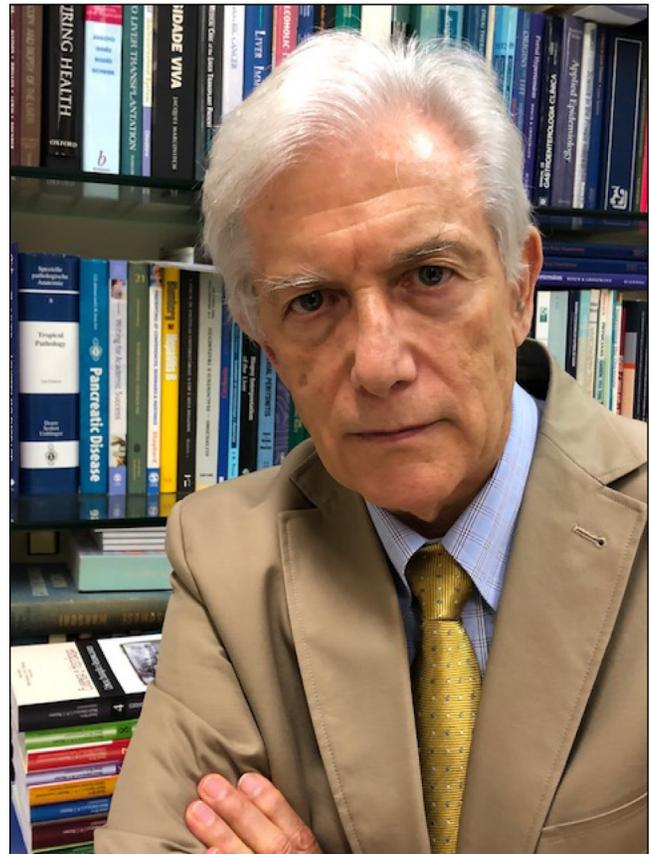
Vicente Arroyo*

European Foundation for the Study of Chronic Liver Failure (EF Clif), Barcelona, Spain

It is a great honour and pleasure to introduce Professor Flair José Carrilho for the 2019 EASL International Recognition Award. To my knowledge, he is the first Latin American hepatologist receiving this award. With this decision, the EASL Executive Committee recognises in Flair the existence of an exceptional generation of Latin American hepatologists who, with tremendous enthusiasm, imagination and effort, have led to the progression of hepatology and improved the care of patients with liver diseases even in a continent facing very difficult conditions.

Flair comes from a modest family living at Londrina, the second largest city of the state of Paraná, in southern Brazil. The word *Londrina* (Little London) was an homage to the British entrepreneurs from a London company (Paraná Plantations Limited) who launched railroad stations in the region at the beginning of the 20th century to ease the transportation of coffee grains from the north of the state to the port of Santos, close to São Paulo. Londrina was formed around one of these stations. The economy of Londrina is based on the agriculture. To give an idea of the economic potency and dynamism of the area, the population of the city was 150,000 when Flair entered at the Londrina University Medical School (1968), 350,000 when he graduated (1973) and more than 400,000 ten years later.

Flair started his professional career at the University Hospital in Londrina. At that time, European hepatology was at the beginning of an expansive period. EASL had already been created, constituting a stimulating platform for young clinicians and investigators. Several large and well-equipped Liver Units with significant research facilities were developed within a short period of time at the Hôpital Beaujon in Paris, King's College Hospital in London, Ringshospitalet in Copenhagen and Hospital Clinic in Barcelona. Finally, the economy of the continent was improving rapidly with clear repercussions for the research policy of most Western European investigation agencies. Aware of this, Flair decided to come to Europe (Barcelona 1974–1976) and work on clinical research in cirrhosis and to get experience in the organisation and operations of the European Liver Units. Although with some specific differences, these Liver Units shared a common design and objectives. They concentrated the main diagnostic and therapeutic tools (regular hospitalisation and intensive care areas, out-patient



clinic, endoscopy, hepatic haemodynamic facilities and liver biopsy interpretation) and specific research laboratories under a single direction, thus promoting the development of scientific clinicians and rapid progression of hepatology as a discipline.

Returning to Brazil, Flair organised together with a group of young gastroenterologists, the first structured Liver Unit in Latin-America, with its main initial research topics being viral hepatitis and liver cancer. The liver cancer research programme was conducted in collaboration with Japanese researchers with whom Flair worked during short stays in Japan. The scientific activity of the initial group, the progressive expansion of its facilities to practice modern clinical hepatology and research, and a rapid increase in the number and quality of publications, made the unit a clear reference for all young Brazilian gastroenterologists interested in hepatology. The expansion of the unit

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* Address: European Foundation for the Study of Chronic Liver Failure (EF Clif), Travessera de Gràcia 11, Barcelona, Spain; Tel.: +34932271402, fax: +34932271419. E-mail address: vicente.arroyo@efclif.com.





Fig. 1. The Hospital das Clínicas of São Paulo today. The high building on the left in the Oncology Institute. In the centre the Medical School, constructed at the beginning of the last century. The rest of the buildings within the garden area correspond to other Clinical Institutes and other Central Services of the Hospital.

also determined a progressive extension of the research programme to other topics, including autoimmune liver diseases, liver transplantation and finally non-alcoholic steatohepatitis.

The most important achievement of Flair, however, was his contribution to the re-design of the Gastroenterology Department at the Hospital das Clínicas of São Paulo, following the model applied to the early European Liver Units in Europe. The Gastroenterology Department is now an integrated organisation with modern clinical and research facilities where gastroenterologists, hepatologists, endoscopists, intensivists, radiologists, biologists, pathologists and surgeons work together in an integrated fashion. The main statistical figures of this Department include 4,500 regular hospitalisations, 2,400 major surgical procedures, including 105 liver transplants and 10 pancreas transplants, 34,000 endoscopies and 120–140 original articles published in indexed journals per year. During the last 30 years the Hospital das Clínicas of São Paulo has also experienced a formidable expansion (Fig. 1), being without doubt the largest (3,000 beds) and most modern, complete and scientifically productive centre in Latin America. In 2004, Flair was nominated Full Professor of Gastroenterology, Director of the Department of Gastroenterology of the University of São Paulo School of Medicine, and Head of Division of Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology of the Hospital das Clínicas.

Flair has a strong reputation in Brazil and Latin America. Twenty-four out of the 197 residents in Gastroenterology formed at the Hospital das Clínicas within the last 30 years are currently chiefs of Gastroenterology services throughout the country. Considering this reputation, Flair was selected as chairman of the ACLARA study, a large multicentre (51 hospitals) Latin American prospective observational investigation assessing the role of ethnicity on the clinical course of acute-on-chronic liver failure (Fig. 2). The central coordinator office of the study is at the Hospital das Clínicas in São Paulo, the design of the study started on November 2017, and the first patient was included in November 2018. The rate of inclusion



Fig. 2. Location of hospitals participating in the ACLARA study.

is remarkably high and the quality of the data excellent, reflecting the efficiency of the team working under the direction of Flair.

None of these achievements would have occurred in the absence of a very special personality. Flair is an excellent physician and manager, human, prudent, honest, effective, loyal to his seniors, generous with his collaborators and friend of his friends. He is a good negotiator mainly because he inspires security and confidence. He is also skilful in exposing problems, transmitting enthusiasm and obtaining private funds for relevant projects not considered by public institutions. Flair married Lais Paes de Barros and they had two children, Guilherme (born in Barcelona) and Maíra and one grandson (Lucas). He is an expert in *Bromeliaceae*, a family of monocot flowering plants of 51 genera and around 3,475 known species. They are native mainly to the tropical Americas, with a few species found in the American subtropics and one in tropical west Africa. He participates in occasional informal meetings with other Brazilian experts in bromeliads and has a collection of approximately 600 species in the garden of his summer house on the coast between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

It is therefore an honour to introduce this great Latin American hepatologist as the 2019 EASL International Recognition Award Recipient.