

OBITUARY

Prof. Dr. Osvaldo Bello (1947-2024)



On December 10, 2024, Dr. Osvaldo Bello, affectionately known as “Profe Bello” by the pediatric community, passed away in Montevideo, Uruguay. A pediatrician, intensivist, neonatologist, and emergency physician, he was instrumental in advancing pediatric emergency care in Uruguay and throughout Latin America.

Beginning his career in the care of critically ill patients in pediatric and neonatal intensive care units (Hospital Filtro, the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit [NICU] of Centro Hospitalario Pereira Rossell, and the Instituto de Diagnóstico y Asistencia Pediátrica Especializada [IDAPE] at Hospital Español), he was known for his dedication to his patients, his commitment to elevating the role of nursing care, and his thorough analysis of issues related to the unique needs of these patients. His distinctive handwriting in the clinical records of the NICU and IDAPE reflected a thoughtful reasoning that demonstrated his deep knowledge and therapeutic approaches, which were closely followed by his colleagues. In 1984, the publication of the book *Enfermería Pediátrica – Insuficiencia Respiratoria Aguda*, co-authored with nursing graduates, already showed his interest in publishing scientific texts and articles.

Those of us who experienced the challenges of caring for pediatric patients in emergency care settings during the 1980s at his beloved Pereira Rossell Hospital—with severe deficiencies in all aspects, including physical facilities, equipment, trained human resources, and management—recognize a turning point when Osvaldo assumed the role of Head of the Pediatric Emergency Department in 1988. His appointment marked the beginning of a new era. Until then, it had been a neglected area, where young interns and a small group of dedicated pediatricians worked tirelessly to address the difficulties.

Osvaldo surrounded himself with colleagues and created a strong team, got the support of the authorities to manage and develop the Pediatric Emergency Department, introduced care protocols, and traveled to reference centers to observe firsthand how pediatric emergency care operated in more developed countries. This marked the beginning of a productive relationship with hospitals and pediatricians in the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

Together with his team, he enhanced the Pediatric Emergency Department at the Pereira Rossell Hospital by establishing specific areas, including an Inhalation Therapy Unit, Resuscitation and Stabilization Area, Observation Area, and Triage, as well as implementing management processes. At the time, these initiatives were pioneering in both the country and the region.

In addition to fostering connections with his intensivist colleagues through the Latin American Society of Pediatric Intensive Care and co-founding the Uruguayan Society of Neonatology and Pediatric Intensive Care, his passion for pediatric emergency care became increasingly evident and impactful.

Publications in national and international scientific journals, contributions to national textbooks and specialty manuals, chapters in international books, as well as guides and guidelines on Pediatric Emergency Medicine, along with his active participation in national and international congresses through lectures, conferences, and case presentations, strengthened Osvaldo’s leadership in Uruguay and across Latin America. The book *Urgencias y Emergencias Pediátricas*, co-authored with Sehabiague, De Leonardis, and Prego, was a landmark in Uruguay and became an essential reference for pediatricians working in emergency care, as well as the book *Agua y Sal*, co-authored with Prego.

He was the founder of the *Sociedad Integrada de Emergencia Pediátrica del Uruguay* (Integrated Pediatric Emergency Society of Uruguay), which is now in its seventeenth edition, providing Uruguayan pediatricians with the opportunity to learn from and connect with leading national and international experts, alongside colleagues from the region who have since joined the initiative.

Always driven and innovative, he was distinguished by his commitment to teaching the discipline from its early days, both in the healthcare setting and later through academic recognition by the School of Medicine at the University of the Republic. He became the first Professor of Pediatric Emergency Medicine, established the postgraduate course in the

specialty, and advocated for the creation of the Pediatric Emergency Medicine residency program.

Together with his team, he traveled across Uruguay, conducting academic activities that were always warmly received by colleagues. He was instrumental in founding Pediatric Intensive Care Units in various departments outside the capital and in establishing Alternative Pediatric Emergency Services, as well as a Network of Inhalation Therapy Units in Montevideo and the metropolitan area. He also had the interest to elaborate projects on Specialized Pediatric Transfer addressed to national authorities, still to be completed.

His connections and recognitions enabled him to travel to nearly all Latin American countries, where he visited hospitals and engaged with the leading experts in Pediatric Emergency across the region. He actively participated in conferences and congresses and was also a member of the Pediatric Simulation Interest Group (GISP).

He played an active role in the initiative to establish the Latin American Society of Pediatric Emergency (SLEPE), marking a significant milestone in his career as an emergency physician. This vision, shared with several colleagues, was officially inaugurated in 2016 in Montevideo during the *XIII Jornadas Integradas de Emergencia Pediátrica*. From there, SLEPE began to grow, undertaking numerous activities, including congresses, courses, training programs, scholarships, internships, and the creation of the journal *Emergencias Pediátricas* in collaboration with the Spanish Society of Pediatric Emergency Medicine, as well as the development of key documents and protocols. Today, SLEPE is a reality and has become a leader in the region. Its first congress, held in Montevideo in 2018, was a landmark event, attracting distinguished colleagues from the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

Those of us who had the honor and privilege of knowing Osvaldo, working alongside him at the Pereira Rossell Hospital, and collaborating to advance Pediatric Emergency Care in our country and the region, sharing complex and sometimes painful situations, overcoming barriers and obstacles, but also having lived great and joyful moments, feel proud to have been part of his team.

We cannot overlook his passions for football and horse racing, the camaraderie shared with friends and colleagues, and his dedication to his family, who supported him unconditionally.

There are undoubtedly many aspects of his career and personal life that have not been mentioned in these lines. Those who knew him will surely recall and cherish these memories, keeping them close to their hearts.

At the conclusion of his tenure as Full Professor in April 2012, during a session in the meeting room of the Council of the School of Medicine at the University of the Republic, he ended an outstanding presentation with the following words: "I must also thank MY DISCIPLES, from whom I have learned so much. One does not know who their true disciples are—they do. I never felt I was their teacher. It is the disciples who, one day, recognize the teacher, and that recognition often takes time."

All of us who had the privilege of knowing him see ourselves as his disciples and recognize Osvaldo as our teacher and mentor. We will never forget him and will always hold him in our thoughts, carrying forward the responsibility of continuing the path paved by "Profe Bello."

Prof. Dr. Javier Prego

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