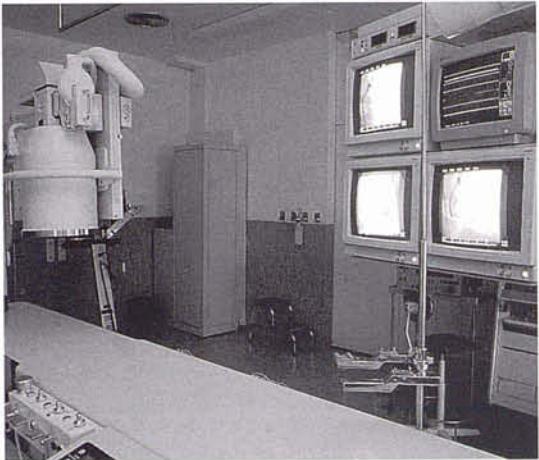


CARDIOLOGY IN CATALONIA



THIS YEAR SEES THE CELEBRATION IN BARCELONA OF THE XIVth EUROPEAN CONGRESS OF CARDIOLOGY, WHICH WILL PROVIDE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK AT THE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATALAN CARDIOLOGY.

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During the nineteenth century, Catalonia's contribution to cardiology –before it existed as a specialist subject– was an outstanding one. In 1801, the Barcelona doctor Francesc Romero was already carrying out the world's first pericardiocenteses –that is, the incision of the heart's outer layer. His contribution led the way in overcoming the myth of Fallopius: *vulnerato corde homo vivere no patest*. Another prominent figure for his contribution to world cardiology is Doctor Santiago Ramon i Cajal, who in 1988, while he was professor of histology at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Barcelona, discovered the existence of the sarcolemma, the fundamental membrane of the cardiac muscle cell. Cardiology as a speciality can be said to originate in 1903, with the development of Einthoven's electrocardiograph, the first device capable of recording the electrical waves produced by the heart. In Catalonia, the first electrocardiographic studies were carried out by Doctor Pi i Sunyer and Doctor Josep M. Bellido, and in 1910 they presented a study on the action of calcium in the heart, at the VIIth International Congress of Physiologists held in Vienna. Not long afterwards, in 1913, and

along with Doctor Celis, they made the embryological development of the heart and electrocardiography known to the world, at the Primer Congrés de Metges de Llengua Catalana.

The Institute of Physiology in Barcelona (1921-1936) was the institution behind Catalan cardiology, thanks largely to its active participation in the international congresses of Edinburgh (1923), Stockholm (1926) and Boston (1929), amongst others, which brought prestige to the name of Catalonia. Doctor Codina Altés –co-author with Doctor Paul Veil of Lyon of the classic of world cardiology *Traité d'electrocardiographie clinique*– also stands out for his important work during this period.

Later on, the Barcelona School of Cardio-Angiology (1952-1972) provided a serious intellectual atmosphere that was of great benefit to the whole university. Doctor Gibert Queraltó, its director, Doctor Balaguer Vintró, Doctor Casellas Bernat, Doctor Morató Portell, Doctor Torner Soler and Doctor Paravasini Parra formed the original nucleus. They were the first people in the world to record the intracavitary potentials of the left ventricle, in a study they presented to the First World Congress of Cardiology in Paris in 1950.

At the end of the seventies, the University of Barcelona broke away from the conformism the Spanish universities were suffering from. Amongst the fruits of this change in attitude were the 1st International Symposium on Arrhythmia (1977), the 1st International Holter Symposium (1979), the Symposium on Diseases of the Pericardium (1986) and the contributions by the Hospital Clínic to the treatment of Ischemic Cardiology. Also of importance are the contributions by the Vall d'Hebron Hospital to the diagnosis and treatment of pericarditis, and those of the Sant Pau Hospital to the monitoring of heart transplants. The work of these three hospitals represents 40% of the scientific work carried out in Spain during the eighties.

The book by Doctor Bayés de Luna, *Textbook of clinical electrocardiography*, and that by Doctor Soler Soler, Doctor Permanyer Miralda and Doctor Sagristà Sauleda, *Pericardial disease. New insights and old dilemmas*, stand out for their originality and their valuable contribution to cardiology.

The XIVth European Congress of Cardiology, to be held in Barcelona from 30 August to 3 September 1992, will also review these valuable contributions from Catalan cardiology. ■