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# FOUNDERS

## **Dr. Trajano Pinheiro** **The Surgeon focused on the population** **(1919-2006)**



**Figure 1**

*Dr. Trajano Pinheiro*

Being one of the most relevant surgeons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dr Trajano Pinheiro, was a highly specialized thoracic surgeon, whose work and interest was the surgical treatment of tuberculosis. It is impossible to distinguish between his life and career, tuberculosis and the Resort Sanatorium of Caramulo.

Born in Elvas, on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1919, he was the son of an army officer. Early on, a tragic event forever changed his life. Both his parents died of tuberculosis when they were living in Oporto, so he and his sister lived by themselves until an uncle who lived in Coimbra brought

them to his home.

He enrolled in the medical school at the University of Coimbra, but he didn't have a financial support to defray his course. So, he started writing study script, printed and sold them to other students in order to afford his studies. Because of this and the way he managed this business, delivering the text only after receiving the money, he earned the nickname "The Jew" and "The Jewish Guy".

He graduated from medical school on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November of 1942 with a mark of 17/20.

The following year, 1943, he joined the Hospitals



**Figure 2** *Corpo Clínico da Estância Sanatorial do Caramulo na década de 70.*

of the University of Coimbra as a volunteer trainee and assistant in the Surgical Clinic course, while waiting for the opportunity to apply to the general internship. During this period, he also studied Sanitary Medicine, which he graduated in July 1943 with a final mark of 17.

His wait was worthwhile and in December 1944, he took part in a public examination for the position of resident at the Hospitals of the University of Coimbra, where he placed first.

During his residency and until November 1946, he worked as a volunteer.

At that time, he joined the medical staff of the Caramulo Sanatorium Group by invitation, as an assistant in the Thoracic Surgery Service, under the direction of Dr. Luis Quintela, working simultaneously in two sanatoriums.

The Caramulo health resort comprised 23 sanatoriums and treated around 1400 patients at any given moment.

From the 1950s onwards, due to an increase of tuberculosis surgical cases, one of the resort's best sanatoriums was converted into a surgical pavilion.

It was state-of-the-art for the era, equipped with air conditioning, a central vacuum system and piped oxygen in the rooms.

This led to the approval of the surgical centre for specialization in Thoracic Surgery and Anaesthesia by the

Portuguese Medical Association.

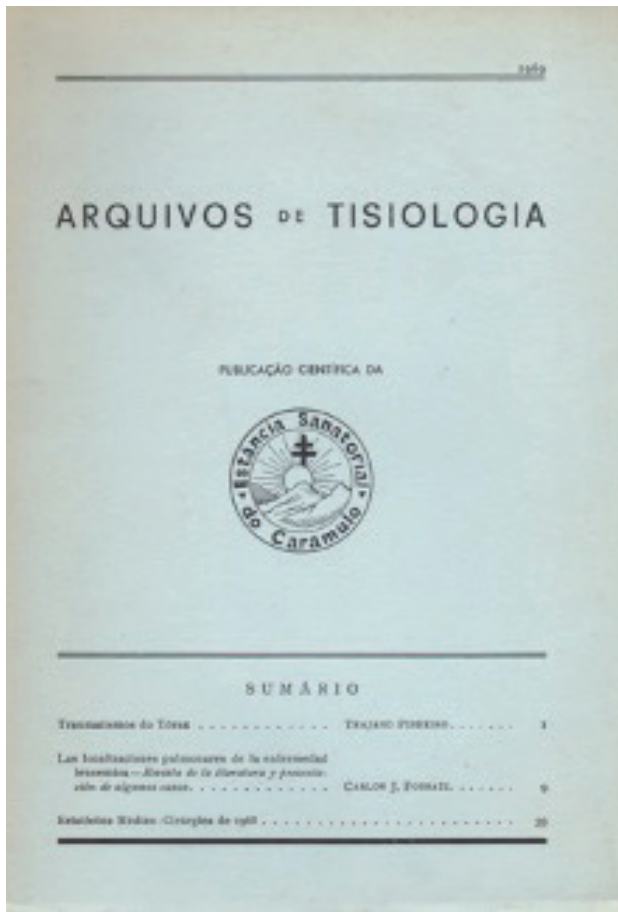
Still, in 1954, a serious situation arose, as the senior surgeon, Dr. Luis Quintela, was forced to move to Lisbon due to personal issues. At the same time, his first assistant, Dr. Manuel Martins Queirós, was chosen as Director of the Sousa Martins Sanatorium in Guarda.

Therefore, the mantle of leadership fell on Dr. Trajano Pinheiro. The resort's management sent him to France to work and learn from one of the world's leading Thoracic Surgeons, Professor Santy from the Grande Blanche Hospital in Lyon.

While Dr. Trajano was doing his training and the future surgical team was being prepared, Dr. João Lacerda, the head of the resort, invited one of Prof. Santy's teams, led by Prof. Marcel Bérard, to come to Caramulo once a month to perform lung surgery. This lasted for almost a year but was abruptly cut short by the death of Prof. Bérard in a car accident.

Being rushed back Dr. Trajano was then given the responsibility of reorganizing the Thoracic Surgery Department, as well as urgently preparing other surgeons, anaesthetists, transfusionists, bronchologists, cardio-pulmonary functional exploration technicians and nurses.

Within one year, the department was fully operational and profitable, as the entire team was living in Caramulo and surgical sessions changed from every



**Figure 3** Capa do "Arquivos de Tisiologia" de 1969.

fortnight to every day.

Between 1953 and 1974, the year the surgical pavilion was officially closed, he performed more than 3000 lung resections and thousands of other surgical procedures (decortication, lysis of adhesions, thoracoplasty, collapse therapy with polistan and lucite balls).

Even by today's standards, these numbers are impressive for a single surgeon.

Every year, a manuscript called "Arquivos de Tisiologia" was published, containing all medical and surgical records of the Sanatorium Resort. The surgical records were highly detailed and give us a very clear idea of the high degree of surgical differentiation and data analysis performed at the time. In addition to the casuistic data, reviews and original articles were also published and Dr. Trajano was the author of several of them. He also published several papers on general and thoracopulmonary surgery and took part in numerous congresses and conferences in the field of respiratory pathology in Portugal and abroad.

In addition to his surgical work at Caramulo, he was also a surgeon at the Celas Sanatorium in Coimbra until it was transformed into a Paediatric Hospital and was invited to collaborate with the Hospitals of the University of Coimbra by the Director of Surgery, Prof. Fernando de Oliveira, to treat thoracopulmonary patients admitted to the Surgical Pathology Department.

From 1964 onwards, he was the head of the General Surgery Unit at the Misericórdia Hospital in Tondela, which was later included in the national hospital network.

It is very important to mention Dr. Trajano's enormous dedication to all surgical patients from Serra do Caramulo who were operated in the Surgical Sanatorium, as well as all the patients from the Municipality of Tondela to whom he dedicated all his attention and knowledge, creating the infrastructure in the Tondela's Hospital that allowed them to be treated there.

He was pivotal for the development of healthcare in that area and was extremely concerned with improving the health of the population.

Lastly, Dr Trajano Pinheiro was one of the founding members of the College of Cardio-thoracic Surgery of the Portuguese Medical Association.

In 1986, in recognition of his contribution to the development of Portuguese Surgery, particularly Thoracic Surgery, he was nominated Honorary President of the 6th National Congress of Surgery, held in Lisbon.