

FOUNDERS

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Rui de Lima, Master and Pioneer in Portuguese Thoracic Surgery



Rui Cândido de Figueiredo Lima is an unavoidable figure amongst the founding fathers of Portuguese Thoracic Surgery. He was born on the 25th of November 1910 in Lisbon where he studied and graduated in Medicine and Surgery on the 29th of July 1933.

Admitted to the Civil Lisbon Hospitals in November 1933, he began his clinical career in this prestigious public institution. In 1936 he was one of the applicants admitted to the General Surgery residency, in Dona Estefânia Hospital, under the guidance of the Senior Surgeon Luís Quintela, working alongside with the surgeons João Rafael Bello de Moraes, Daniel Carreira and Martins de Queirós.

Hired as a General Surgery resident, he worked initially as a General Surgeon and later as a Thoracic Surgeon, participating in the first lung resections ever performed in Portugal, initiating his dedication to Thoracic Surgery from 1938 onward. After public exams where he was approved with "absolute merit", he attained the title of General Surgery Specialist by the Portuguese Medical Board, but still was not admitted on the Civil Hospitals payroll.

In 1941, a surgical department was created for tuberculosis treatment at Hospital Curry Cabral, headed by Luis Quintela, where he gained experience doing collapse therapy techniques (therapeutic pneumothorax and thoracoplasty) but also lung resections.

Seeking further knowledge he went to England in 1946 with a British Council scholarship, touring several hospitals for 6 months (Brompton Hospital, London Chest Hospital, and London Hospital) and finally working as a resident at the Harefield County Hospital in Uxbridge. He had firsthand experience cooperating with renowned Thoracic surgeons at the time: Price Thomas, Holme Sellors Thompson, Tubbs, Brock and Paterson among others. In Papworth (Cambridge) he came into contact with the cinesotherapy techniques, already vastly applied in the perioperative period, for the rehabilitation of tuberculosis patients.

Back in Lisbon, in the beginning of 1947, he went back to work as a general surgeon with Luis Quintela. By then he had accumulated a wide experience in Thoracic surgery, but was unable to exercise his chosen profession for the Lisbon Civil Hospitals had no posts for Thoracic surgeons, and the National Institute for Assistance to Tuberculous (I.A.N.T.) was not recruiting.

A window of opportunity presented itself when the I.A.N.T. opened two posts for Thoracic surgeons in 1950. Despite having roots in Lisbon, he ran for the D. Manuel II Sanatorium in Vila Nova de Gaia, being hired together with Esteves Pinto in July 1951.

An opening as Head of Department at the Flamengo Sanatorium, in Vialonga, brought him back to the Lisbon District in November 1951. His first action was to increase the treatment capacity from 60 to 130 beds, improving medical and surgical care, for tuberculosis was a social calamity. The creation of a pathology laboratory, a department of bronchoscopic intervention and improvements in the radiology department were other interventions that made an enormous difference in patient care.

The Flamengo Sanatorium referred patients for surgery to the D. Carlos I Sanatorium in Lisbon, but with a waiting list of many months, so he purchased surgical

instruments (some at his own expense) and founded a small Thoracic Surgery Department. In 1952 he performed the first successful lobectomy at the I.A.N.T. From December 1951 to June 1952 he operated 138 patients.

As a Thoracic Surgeon of the I.A.N.T., he also worked at the Encosta da Saúde Sanatorium, accumulating a total of 385 collapse therapies and lung resections surgeries from 1950 to 1961.

In July 1952 he transferred to D Carlos I Sanatorium. Initially he was authorized to operate on tuberculosis only. Later in 1954, due to the necessity to operate associated pathology in infectious tuberculosis patients he was authorized to perform general surgery in these patients at the Sanatorium.

From 1952 to 1955 he underwent several foreign fellowships, at Thoracic Surgery reference centers in Europe, where he contacted with the emerging techniques for lung resection.

At Edouard Herriot Hospital in Lyon he was with Paul Santy and Marcel Bérard in 1952 and 1954. In Sweden, in 1955, he contacted with Craaford and Bjork at the Karolinska. The same year he was in Paris at Broussais Hospital with D'Allaines and Dubost, at Laennec Hospital with J. Mathey, and in Holland at the Groningen University Hospital with Leendert Eerland.

In 1953 he was appointed as Head of Surgery of the I.A.N.T., and as such, Director of the Thoracic Surgery center of the South, at D Carlos Sanatorium. He went to Sousa Martins Sanatorium, in Guarda, on a regular basis every 15 days, to perform surgery but later, by his order, the patients that needed surgery were transferred to D. Carlos I Sanatorium where the patients received better post-operative care.

That same year, with the emergence of Cardiac Surgery, the Lisbon Center of Cardiovascular Surgery was created, within the Thoracic Surgery Center. He accumulated the post as Director of Cardiovascular Surgery until 1955, when a separation of pulmonary surgery and cardiovascular surgery occurred. He carried on as Director of the Thoracic Surgery Center, that grew and evolved under his leadership to become a national Thoracic Surgery reference center perpetuated by his followers.

From 1960 to 1963 he was a member of the Advisory Board for the I.A.N.T. and in 1972 he was appointed by the Secretary of State for a commission to reform the I.A.N.T. With the conversion of the so called "dispensários"s to primary care centers and the D. Carlos I and D. Manuel II Sanatoria into large Hospital Units, these would absorb the patients from some small sanatoria and other even smaller nursing shelters.

In 1975 the D. Carlos I Sanatorium was renamed as Hospital Pulido Valente, classified as a Central Hospital, where he continued as Head of Thoracic Surgery Department, the only surgical department in Portugal dedicated exclusively to non-cardiac Thoracic Surgery, until the present days.

That same year the Thoracic Surgery Department of Hospital Pulido Valente received the first General Surgery residents for the Thoracic Surgery fellowship, and from 1978 onwards, was recognized proficiency for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery training, receiving its first residents.

From 1976 until his retirement in November 1980, he taught General Surgery and Thoracic Surgery as an Invited Professor at the Faculdade de Ciências Médicas in Lisbon (now renamed "Nova Medical School").

On a personal level, I had the privilege of being a resident at his Department, working directly under his guidance, if only for a short time, from 1979 till 1980. He introduced me to the world of Thoracic Surgery from the treatment of tuberculosis and its sequels to the thoracic surgical oncology that was starting to emerge at that time.

His dedication to his patients, the respect for human life and the enthusiasm with which he taught and transmitted all his knowledge and life experience characterized his personality.

He performed the surgical technique with secure and weighted gestures, as a reflection of his vast experience of more than 4500 thoracic surgeries, not avoiding difficult cases but setting surgical indications for the best results with wisdom and talent.

He contributed for the evolution of Portuguese Thoracic Surgery with the publication of the modification of thoracoplasty and surgical treatment of Hydatid cysts techniques in "Variante da técnica de toracoplastia" and "Técnica pessoal de aspiração dos quistos hidáticos", as well as several publications on the technique of bronchoplasty from 1965 to 1980 ("A nossa experiência no tratamento dos adenomas brônquicos" and "Bronchial Adenoma: clinicopathologic study and results of treatment") and other personal unpublished technique modifications that he passed along to his followers.

Affiliated to several national and international scientific Societies, he was an effective member of the Board of Directors of the International Union Against Tuberculosis, and was elected as vice-president of the Portuguese Society of Respiratory Pathology from 1974 -1976.

After his initial experience as secretary to the medical Journal "Medicina Contemporânea" from 1935 to 1945, headed by Reynaldo dos Santos and Alberto Mac-Bride, he ended up publishing 44 papers in national and international medical journals, and was responsible for over 50 lectures in Thoracic Surgery both in Portugal and abroad.

It is unquestionable the way Dr. Rui Cândido de Figueiredo Lima's contribution brought prestige to Portuguese Thoracic Surgery, especially at D. Carlos I Sanatorium, latter, Hospital Pulido Valente.

In 2003 he passed beyond life and time, but his human and professional dimension will survive in the memory of all those who worked alongside him and had the privilege of his company. He was one of the most distinguished and significant pioneers and will go down in History as one of the Fathers of Portuguese Thoracic Surgery.

In conclusion I wish to express my uttermost pride and honor of having worked as his close assistant, on a daily basis, if only for one year, until his retirement at Hospital Pulido Valente

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