

## PREFACE

Together with the academic history of this book, there is a personal experience that in this case is worthwhile to mention. Finishing the doctorate and this book is not a personal achievement; it is the product of other people's effort and collaboration. Apart from the acknowledgement to people who directly participated in the research itself there is another group with an indirect but valuable input.

When I decided to quit the Doctorate course in the National Institute of Public Health, Dr. Julio Frenk suggested to find the right course for me in a different country. The doctorate course in that institution was not bad but our training (Alex, Rossana, Cecilia, Pablo and myself) during the Master in Science in Epidemiology course directed by Dr. Jose Luis Bobadilla offered more than that and everybody knew it especially Dr. Frenk who participated everyday in our training. After a few years, Dr. Frenk's suggestion became a prediction. His support during my training and for this research project wherever he was (Mexico, USA, or Switzerland) and whatever his position is so valuable to me. With Dr. Frenk as the Minister of Health in Mexico in the new Mexican government, the really serious approach to the elderly people's health is guaranteed.

During the mentioned master's course I was the only student that Dr. Bobadilla supervised. Of course this opportunity represented a very good and challenging experience. He was the type of person who never accepted 'good' as a result but only 'excellent'. Dr. Bobadilla who was my supervisor, boss, and mentor, and at the end of his life my closest friend, always was against my research on ageing. One of our discussions about this finished when I told him that he was going to thank me in 25 years when he was going to be part of my cohort. Unfortunately this is no longer possible, I always ask myself if he knew this from the beginning. I remember him laughing about my answer but maybe he was laughing because he knew, by likelihood, that he never was going to be part of my cohort. He passed away in October 1997 just in the middle of this research fieldwork.

When Dr. Onofre Muñoz invited me to work with him in 1991 in IMSS, I asked Dr. Bobadilla his opinion about it. His answer was: “if other person would have offered this to you I should think about it twice before giving you my advice but I do not have any doubt that you have to accept it. Dr. Muñoz is the most honest, intelligent, and human researchers I have met. When do you have to answer? Go back and answer right now that you accept. You are not going to have another opportunity like this.” As always, he was right, working close and together with Dr. Muñoz was one of the most delightful working and academic experiences in my life (the other one was with Dr. Bobadilla).

In 1993 Dr. Muñoz also suggested I needed to start the Doctorate in a different country and in front of this big decision he paid for a trip to visit different universities in United States. When we (Rossana and myself) came back from the USA in February 1994 my answer was that I was not going to study in that country. The violence between and against teenagers there was a very important issue and I have a daughter who was twelve at that time. He understood my reluctance to go to the USA because of my personal situation but suggested looking for another alternative in Europe. Of course my first option was the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine since Dr. Bobadilla obtained his PhD there. I was accepted thanks to Dr. Bobadilla and Dr. Frenk’s recommendation letters and started the course. In 1995 I told Dr. Muñoz that I had decided to change my maternal mortality project for another about population ageing and I planned to have a cohort of elderly people in Mexico. He immediately recognised that it was an un-explored important field and since then I have received full support from IMSS through him for that research and other related projects.

During the last six years, on several occasions I was in difficulty because of various factors. Once I was close to abandoning the PhD but Dr. Muñoz’s support, guidance and affection were factors that always challenged me to push forward until the end. Each time I want to remember Dr. Muñoz, I just have to recreate into my mind one of our five minutes talks at 7:30 am seated in my little office on the fourth floor. The question that day was related to his expectations about myself and his answer was: “I hope that in ten years you are going to be seated in my place”. It is a very nice compliment but an unreachable expectation. He is so intelligent that now is going to be the key person for the policy making in the medical area in IMSS. To be honest I cannot see myself even in his previous position but I will be always

grateful for his motivational strategy. Dr. Muñoz has been a substitute mentor for me as he proposed when I lost Dr. Bobadilla. I thank him for adopting me as his academic daughter; and of course I will thank him even more if he is directing some of his policies to really care for the Mexican elderly population. Right now the decision is in his hands, that is my expectation about him.

Finally I need to mention another important and modest person, Dr. Guillermo Soberón Acevedo. Each time I have needed to approach to him his busy diary has instantly found a place for me. No one in Mexico as Dr. Soberón knows that a phone call by appointment, when there is something important to decide, is the most efficient and effective way of making joint decisions. He is always available with a great deal of knowledge but with more patience to help making good and oriented decisions. I remember something that Dr. Enrique Ruelas told me about Dr. Soberón: “He is a first class man”. I agree. Having being engaged within the most important positions in the Mexican academic and political life in the Health field allows him to recognise what is important and what is not. When I asked him for support to publish this book, he instantly answered “yes, it is possible and important”. I am not very sure if he is now part of my cohort but I am very sure that everybody would like to age with at least a quarter his capacity, intelligence and kindness.

If this book is being published, it is because of those who believed that the project was worthwhile and results could be useful for making the difference and attracting attention towards the elderly people health needs. My contribution is being the lucky instrument close to the right persons, at the right time as Dr. Bobadilla used to describe me.

AUTHOR