

Special Editorial - Omar Gabriel

In August, when professor Omar Gabriel da Silva Filho was hospitalized, I stopped to ponder on the contributions of this great orthodontist, whom I knew not well, although paradoxically, always felt I knew a lot. The first thing that sprung to my mind was the gorgeously compelling speech¹ delivered by writer José Saramago on being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998. It was titled "How Characters Became the Masters and the Author Their Apprentice." In it he portrays with subtle poignancy how much a master can learn. A much praised, albeit seldom practiced virtue. And a hallmark of Prof. Omar's life.

I was never Prof. Omar's student, although in many respects I feel as if I have been. Allow me to explain. When I completed my orthodontic training at Rio de Janeiro Federal University (UFRJ), I had but a handful of idols. Among these was Omar, a teacher I had seen only once, and who had charmed me with his down-to-earth, didactic and investigative spirit. At the time, he was one of the few researchers who managed to pass the stringent filters of international journals.

He has always been a stickler for protocols. Today, with over 200 published works, he has established many which are used internationally. Interestingly, this was a forward-looking concern. Evidence-based practice longs to create protocols, and at a time when scientific evidence was still embryonic, his pursuits could be seen as cutting edge even today.

Omar trained many orthodontists, and all those I have talked to over the years were unanimous in their admiration of his inability to say no, and the friendly and respectful way in which he treats students, staff and patients alike. He never speaks ill of other people, and always respects their differences.

I was informed by a friend—Dr. Patricia Freitas Zambonato—about Omar's health condition just before writing these words. She told me it was serious, but stable. The doctors' uncertainty about his diagnosis and prognosis only strengthens our hopes. Some of my friend's sympathetic words about her teacher sounded particularly touching: "Omar is an Angel, who is only capable of doing good," she said.

We are praying for angels to hold his hands.

Jorge Faber

REFERENCES

1. Saramago J. Nobel Lecture (Portuguese). Nobelprize.org. Official web site of the Nobel prize. [Access Sept 27, 2010]. Available from: http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1998/lecture-p.html.