

Title: Farewell, Francisco

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## Abstract

The community of transplant infectious disease is mourning the unexpected death of Francisco M. Marty, 53, born on March 26th, 1968 and passed away on April 8th, 2021. Having shaped an emerging medical discipline over two decades, with his outstanding dedication and sensitivity, knowledge and skill, intelligence and compassion, Francisco will remain in our thoughts, a splendid paragon for medical doctors and clinician scientists around the globe, and for us in transplant infectious disease.

## Manuscript body

The lights were still dimmed between two plenary presentations at the TTS -ESOT World Transplant Congress in Vienna in 2004, when Dr Robert H. Rubin turned to me and said: *“Hans, I would like to talk to you for moment - I want you to take care of that Journal, together with Francisco...”*. So were we introduced and immediately connected through *Transplant Infectious Disease* - a simple twist of fate across two continents? Francisco and myself, we were overwhelmed by Bob’s trust and confidence, and nervous about the unexpected upcoming challenges <sup>1</sup> as neither of us knew exactly what this honor might entail.

Shying away or failure was not an option, and as always, Bob’s vision was crystal clear – inspirational, translational, on several levels:

- providing a forum for the dedicated clinicians and researchers around the world who cared for a special group of patients, readily identifiable by their embarking on one of

the foremost consequential and scientific miracles of modern medicine:

transplantation.

- bringing together different worlds of knowledge: pathology, immunology and function, which nearly always collide in transplant infectious disease.
- building a framework of clinical, laboratory, and experimental expertise that by collaboration and cross-referencing prepared the grounds for improving transplant outcomes as well as a new medical specialty of transplant ID doctors.

The personal, geographic and professional settings of Francisco and myself were sufficiently different to provide complementary approaches and expertise, yet whole-heartedly united in admiration and respect for transplant ID, its inspirational leaders, and ready to embrace the outlined conceptual challenges of transplantation medicine. Indeed, his training in the actual epicenter of the emerging transplant ID in Boston, MA (USA) spearheaded by Drs Robert H. Rubin and Jay A. Fishman <sup>2</sup> provided Francisco with a unique access to excellence and knowledge that he developed further.

Francisco's origin and initial medical education in Caracas, Venezuela naturally equipped him with an international perspective as well as with a special interest and clinical competence in parasitic infections. This special expertise of Francisco became increasingly relevant in transplantation medicine, not only because of migration, global travel and climate change, but also due to the need and ability of developing transplant programs in resource-limited countries.

We started out as greenhorn *Senior Editors* under the auspices of the *Founding Editor*, Dr Robert H. Rubin, and his long-time associate, Ms. Betsy Barr as the key Editorial

Assistance, if not Governance, and with whom we formed a wonderful four-leaf clover managing *Transplant Infectious Disease*. Betsy was instrumental in significantly raising the quality of the *Journal* by helping authors to submit, revise and resubmit their manuscripts, which she eventually improved for language, grammar and logic during type-setting. Thereby, Betsy put into life the spirit and vision of Bob long after his formal retirement, and provided an additional learning experience to all of us. And while always signing herself with 'Betsy', it took her a long time and some arm-twisting to switch from "Dr. Marty and Dr. Hirsch" to "Dear Francisco and Hans".

*«I was thinking that this paper with the 'mysterious title' (which I would like to change to "Beware the 'Red Herring' - a difficult diagnosis") would be a good candidate for the Clinico-pathologic Conference category of TID (although I hate to single out such a sloppily prepared and lazily revised paper for special attention). We haven't had a CPC paper in awhile, and this seems in that style of a 'mystery diagnosis" - What do you think? Betsy»*

In the first years of our joint journey, Bob continued to shape the discipline by a series of Editorials in the *Journal*, provided important frameworks and introduced special topics<sup>3</sup>. Of course, the "net state of immunosuppression" remains the most widely known concept, and Bob's mantra was truly multidimensional and hence multidisciplinary: understanding the anatomic and surgical challenges, the breaches in the anatomy, combining meticulous clinical expertise with knowledge about the complex biology of microbes, and the interplay of immunity and inflammation in the pathogenesis, all of which is relevant in infectious diseases, but reaches the highest complexity in transplant ID<sup>4-6</sup>.

Francisco lived and mastered all of these aspects in his clinical practice to utmost perfection which benefited his patients, his mentees, his colleagues locally and in other centers around the world. His leadership was also felt as we developed the *Journal* further to a peer-reviewed resource for transplant ID, having at least six issues per year, and, when receiving more submissions than we could handle alone, with strong support by an outstanding international team of associate editors: Emily Blumberg, Monica Slavin, Jose-Maria Aguado, Andreas Groll, Mike Ison, and Raymond Razonable.

Francisco naturally became an outstanding leader in the transplant ID community, providing numerous landmark contributions to all aspects of this discipline <sup>7</sup>. Francisco engaged in the editorial board of multiple journals and professional societies including the TTS section “Transplant Infectious Disease” (Figure 1), yet found time for pursuing passionately his interests in history and photography, sharing his world on twitter or even joining social events like the exclusive TID Supper Club founded during ATC in Seattle 2013.

Extending his clinical and academic expertise from solid organ transplantation to allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation, Francisco also pushed the envelope of how to manage viral complications post-transplant including those by the ongoing SARS-CoV-2/CoVID-19 pandemic <sup>7</sup>. Indeed, Francisco contributed seminal studies evaluating risk factors and new antiviral approaches to several viral diseases in transplant patients. This also included cytomegalovirus <sup>8</sup>, one of Bob and Jay’s favorite challenges because of the multilayered bi-directionality of direct cytopathic and indirect effects of this virus on transplant outcomes <sup>9</sup>. Thus, the recent phase 3 study describing previously unmatched benefits of a cytomegalovirus-specific antiviral drug, a newly developed terminase inhibitor, in allogeneic HCT was led by Francisco M. Marty as first author of this international multicenter trial, and which was published in another relevant journal from the US East coast <sup>10</sup>. The results

represented a long-time searched-for game changer of how to manage cytomegalovirus infection, replication and disease in transplant patients.

After having worked together for *Transplant Infectious Disease* for a decade and a half, Francisco and myself had prepared relaying the torch of the Senior Editor of *Transplant Infectious Disease* to Mike G. Ison in 2021. It is leaving me with shock and utmost sadness, learning that my long-time partner and friend Francisco has died in a tragic accident, two weeks after his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday during a leisure trip near Constanza, Dominican Republic. Francisco's abrupt absence is painfully felt, among us, his friends and colleagues, his mentees - his family, also in a broader sense.

Having shaped an emerging medical discipline, with his outstanding dedication and sensitivity, knowledge and skill, intelligence and compassion, Francisco will remain in my mind, a splendid paragon for medical doctors and clinician scientists around the globe, and for all of us in transplant ID.

Farewell, Francisco – The bells of the crown/

Are being stolen by bandits/

You must follow the sound...

Thank you, Francisco!

# Accepted Article

Hans H. Hirsch, MD, MS

Emeritus Editor

**Figure legends**

**Figure 1: Attendees of the 12<sup>th</sup> international Transplant Infectious Disease Conference  
November 13, 2019, Dubai, UAE**

Francisco M. Marty (Boston, USA) with Hans H. Hirsch (Basel, SWI), Wanessa Clemente (Belo Horizonte, BRA), Clarisse Machado (São Paulo, BRA), Michael G. Ison (Chicago, USA), John W. Baddley (Baltimore, USA) (from left to right)

<https://tts.org/component/tts/?view=presentations&meeting=83&Itemid=139>.

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