

## *IN MEMORIAM:* **RAFAEL HERRERA**

For all prison healthcare providers concerned with our patients' health, the loss of Rafael Herrera is a motive for deep sadness. I had the chance of meeting Rafael in the Conference of the Spanish Society of Prison Health held in Granada in 2000. A common friend introduced us and from that moment on both Rafael and his fellow worker, Dr. Mariano Hernandez, with whom he shared a wholehearted approach to the neuropsychiatric field, became a consultation and assessment reference for me as well as for any other concerned with the management of psychiatric care within prisons.

Rafael and Mariano, by means of the Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry, became an "outside" driving force for the same concerns, denounces and proposals that prison healthcare providers were carrying out from the inside, especially concerning mental health.

Rafael, responsible for the Healthcare Centre in Puerto de Santa Maria, began visiting the prison of Puerto in the early years of the 1990s. He then encountered one of the prison's hardest realities: young inmates, considered dangerous, who in an important percentage presented a relevant load of psychiatric pathology. Obviously, these visits had a great impact in a professional who was fully engaged with mental health, and had such a training and awareness, leading him to home in on the penitentiary scene.

I am fully aware –because Rafael told me so in several occasions– that the situation of mental patients in prison especially disturbed him. His generous spir-

its, which always lead him to stand on the side of the weaker with the sole intention of providing support, made him run training sessions with the prison physicians in Puerto, which were always beneficial for both inmates and professionals. Always willing to altruistically collaborate, he actively participated from his Association in the activities of the mental health group which was jointly founded by the Spanish Society of Prison Health and the Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry.

Rafael already sensed that a great part of the heavy pathologic load concerning mental health observed in prisons, was distinctive of the excluded population commonly found in such context, and to whom Rafael dedicated so much affection, dedication and professionalism throughout his life.

A tireless worker, a wise man, the kindest of collaborators and a coordinator unusually gifted for didactics, Rafael has decisively contributed to the evolution of prison psychiatrics. This is how he will be remembered by all prison mental healthcare providers and how it is fair that I reflect so in these quick notes that I write with the reminiscence of lost conversations, the admiration for his job, the sadness for his absence, and ultimately with the emotion of who has lost a friend.

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