

Tribute to two inescapable figures of Portuguese Otorhinolaryngology: Samuel Ruah and Carlos Ruah

ENT History

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Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this article is to review the career of two Portuguese ENTs, Dr. Samuel Allenby Bentes Ruah and Prof. Moisés Carlos Bentes Ruah, in the context of a donation from Dr. Samuel Ruah's estate.

Study Design: Qualitative study

Material and Methods: An online search of all information available about Dr. Samuel Ruah and Prof. Carlos Ruah was performed. Afterwards, several interviews were conducted with persons of interest. Simultaneously, a partial cataloging of the donated collection was conducted.

Results: These two doctors have had careers of great renown: Dr. Samuel Ruah as Chief of Otolaryngology at Dona Estefânia Hospital, Prof. Carlos Ruah for his international projection, academic and research activities and both were illustrious ENTs in their private clinical practice.

Conclusions: Both are examples of service, dedication, sacrifice and excellency in Medicine and have inspired and continue to inspire us all to reach further beyond.

Keywords: Humanities; History of Medicine

Introduction

In 2021, the Maximiano Lemos Museum of the History of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto (FMUP) received a large and valuable donation of medical-surgical material and rare old books, both on medicine and humanities, from the collection of Dr. Samuel Allenby Bentes Ruah. This generous donation came from the initiative of his son, Professor Moisés Carlos Bentes Ruah, who recognizing the relevance of his father's personal books to the medical knowledge of his time, decided to donate them for this project. The donation represents only a small fraction of the greatness of these two personalities, both of whom represent the incessant search

for knowledge, curiosity, and spirit of self-actualization, as well as the nobility of spirit and altruism that led to this gift. The aim of this article is to review the careers of these two specialists in Otorhinolaryngology (ORL), who each in their own generation, stood out as examples of excellence, sacrifice, dedication, and service. The purpose is to remember some of their contributions, not only to ORL but also to Medicine in general, and to preserve the memory of two exceptional individuals and their human and technical qualities, so that they continue to inspire future generations of young physicians, just as they did during their long and fruitful careers.

Materials and Methods

For preparing this article and gaining the best possible understanding of these two personalities, various sources were consulted. Firstly, an online search was conducted for all available information on Prof. Carlos Ruah and Dr. Samuel Ruah, including magazine articles, interviews given by Prof. Carlos Ruah to the media, and the obituary of Dr. Samuel Ruah, which is available in the website of the Portuguese Society of Otorhinolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery (SPORL-CCP). Subsequently, all relevant documentation was requested from the University of Lisbon Archives, which unfortunately did not respond in time for inclusion in this article. In addition, the main author participated in the 69th Congress of the SPORL-CCP on May 6, 2022, in which a tribute was paid to its Honorary President, Prof. Carlos Ruah.

Subsequently, several interviews were conducted with people with an interest in the life and career of Dr. Samuel Ruah and Prof. Carlos Ruah, namely Prof. Jorge Spratley, Prof. Clara Capucho, Dr. Luísa Monteiro, as well as Prof. Carlos Ruah himself and his wife, the architect Fany Ruah.

Parallel to this whole process, the main author, with the collaboration of co-authors Prof. Amélia Ricon Ferraz and Prof. Jorge Spratley, made an effort to catalog the collection donated to the Maximiano Lemos Museum

of the History of Medicine at FMUP, which resulted in the full cataloging of the donated books and partial cataloging of the medical-surgical material.

Results

Dr. Samuel Allenby Bentes Ruah

First Years and Hospital Career

Dr. Samuel Ruah was born on September 20, 1920 in Lisbon, where he completed all his basic education, having studied at Liceu Camões. He finished his medical degree in November 1944 and then began training in ORL in 1946 at Hospital de S. José, under the guidance of Dr. Alberto Mendonça. He was probably Mendonça's last disciple, as he retired in 1949 on reaching the age limit.^{1,2}

In February 1949, he was granted the title of Specialist by the Portuguese Medical Association and in 1954, he started Intermediate Residency under the guidance of Dr. Luís Macieira. In 1959, he was a successful candidate for the position of a Specialist in ORL and was placed in the ORL Department of Hospital Dona Estefânia (HDE).^{1,2}

When Dr. Luís Macieira passed away in 1964, Dr. Samuel Ruah became the Director of the Department, first provisionally and then permanently in 1965.^{1,2}

Director of the ORL Department of Hospital Dona Estefânia

Dr. Samuel Ruah was Director of the ORL Department of HDE for 25 years until he retired in 1990 on reaching the age limit. During these years, on his initiative, remodeling and renovation works were undertaken, along with the modernization of the department: important diagnostic, examination, and surgical materials were purchased; conditions of the infirmary were improved; and the Allergology department was created, which was also under his direction as it was then combined with the ORL department.^{2,3} On his initiative, conferences and training courses were also promoted.² In addition to the important mentioned above, the most significant mark of his management was

the construction of the Diagnostic Center for Otorhinolaryngology and Immuno-Allergology, which opened in December 1988 and had the most modern technological equipment and conditions required for a humane and technically advanced practice of medicine. This center represented the culmination of a long effort on behalf of the patients and against the undignified conditions under which they had been treated until then.¹⁻⁵

National and International Relations

It was early on that Dr. Samuel Ruah's showed that his dedication and tenacity extended beyond his hospital career with the reinstitution, together with Dr. Silva Alves, of the Portuguese Society of Otorhinolaryngology (SPORL), of which he was the Secretary General between 1959 and 1961.¹ He was an active participant in its meetings and became SPORL's No.1 member in 2010.^{1,2} Besides his role as director of the department, he was also President of the College of Specialists in ORL of the Medical Association between 1978 and 1983. In addition, he was Portugal's representative at the Union Européenne des Medecins Specialistes, first as an observer and then as a full member, a position he held for six years, and also at the European Working Group in Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology. He was president and vice-president of the Sociedade Médica dos Hospitais Cívicos de Lisboa.^{1,2} He was a regular and active presence at national and international meetings, and has a vast bibliography consisting of approximately 120 studies published in national and foreign journals, several book chapters, and one ORL textbook on Otitis Media, which he wrote together with his son, Prof. Carlos Ruah.^{1,2}

Private Practice

Dr. Samuel Ruah practiced at the Red Cross Clinic in Lisbon. His clinical practice in the private sector reached its peak with the creation of an ORL clinic, the Clínica Otorrinolaringológica Drs. Ruah, at Avenue António Augusto Aguiar in Lisbon. He worked

there alone and alongside his son for 55 years until his death. The clinic was highly prestigious and was visited by around 140,000 patients over the years, including high-ranking government officials, diplomats, and foreign dignitaries.^{3,6}

Professor Moisés Carlos Bentes Ruah

Early years and Career in the US

Prof. Carlos Ruah was born on July 18, 1955 in Lisbon, where he lived with his parents in his grandparents' house on Avenue Álvares Cabral until he was four years old. He went to elementary school at the Lycée Français Charles Lepierre from 1960 to 1965 and then moved on to Liceu Normal Pedro Nunes, where he completed his secondary education. He enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Lisbon in September 1972 and received his degree on October 25, 1978, with a final classification of 16.⁵

After graduating, he underwent his Internship from January 2, 1979 to February 21, 1981 as a Polyclinic Intern at the Hospital de Santa Maria, finishing with the classification of Proficient. He then did Peripheral Health Service at the Cadaval Health Center from March 1981 to March 1982. At the end of this period, in July 1980, he took the entrance exams to apply for Medical Residency at the American Embassy, more specifically the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), which he passed with a classification of 79%, and subsequently the Visa Qualifying Examination (VQE) in September 1981. This allowed him to obtain a visa to enter the US as a physician and begin his residency under tutelage.⁵

By superior order, he was released from his duties in Portugal and allowed to pursue a medical career in the US, where he stayed for eight years from 1982 to 1990.⁵

His international career began in Boston, with an internship in Neurology, under the direction of Dr. Robert C. Feldman from July 1, 1982 to June 30, 1983 at the Veterans Administration Medical Center. During this internship, he took the Federal Licensing Examination (FLEX), the first compulsory exam required to practice

medicine in the US. He was approved and entered a General Surgery Residency, which is compulsory in the US for entry into the ORL specialty, at Boston University Medical Center from July 1, 1983 to June 30, 1984, under the direction of Dr. Lester Williams. In the next step of his career, he finally entered the ORL Specialty on July 1, 1984, completing his residency under the direction of Dr. M. Stuart Strong until July 1985, and then Dr. George T. Simpson until June 30, 1988, which is the year his residency ended. During the third year of residency, he also underwent partial training in ORL Pathological Anatomy and Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery of the Face and Neck.⁵ After residency, he passed the Specialty Examination in Chicago, achieving the second place in a group of 400 examinees from across the US, with the final percentile of 98% (classification of 18). This excellent result allowed him to become a Specialist in ORL in the US without taking the oral exam, in addition to becoming a fellow of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery.⁵ As a specialist, he conducted a wide range of clinical and research activities in a short period of time, between July 1, 1988 and June 30, 1989, along with pursuing a subspecialty in Otolaryngology and Surgical and Experimental Neurotology under the guidance of Dr. Michael M. Paparella. He was a member of the hospital staff at Riverside Medical Center in Minneapolis and held monthly ORL appointments at hospitals in Wheaton, Ortonville, and Buffalo. He was a member of the Minnesota Department of Health, where he conducted a monthly outpatient clinic for children with congenital face and neck malformations, and remains to this day a Research Collaborator at the University of Minnesota Otitis Media Research Center.⁵

Return to Portugal and Hospital Career

After finishing his hospital career in the US, Prof. Carlos Ruah returned to Portugal, where he obtained the equivalent of the grade of Attending Physician on May 29,

1990, granted by the Secretary of State of the Minister of Health, Dr. Albino Aroso. He restarted his hospital career in Portugal by performing clinical activities as a volunteer in the ORL Department No. 5 of HDE, under the direction of his father from September 1989 to November 1, 1991. This activity was interrupted twice to allow him to continue his work as a Research Collaborator at the University of Minnesota. On January 1, 1992, he began working as a temporary physician in the ORL Department of the Egas Moniz University Hospital, under the direction of Prof. Ruy da Silva Santos Penha, an activity he pursued until the announcement of an exam for the position of Attending Physician, which took place on June 9, 1994, and in which he came first with a classification of 19.5. As Attending Physician, he worked in the Outpatient ORL and Head and Neck Clinic, as well as the emergency department, operating room, and ward.⁵

Private Practice

In parallel with his career as Attending Physician, Prof. Carlos Ruah was also very active in the private sector. He practiced at Clínica Europa in Carcavelos, and like his father, his career peaked at Clínica Otorrinolaringológica Drs. Ruah, where he worked alongside Dr. Ruah after his return to Portugal in 1990 until 2016. That year, with the death of Dr. Samuel, the clinic was closed and at the invitation of Dr. Luísa Monteiro, Coordinator of the ORL Unit at Hospital Lusíadas Lisboa, Prof. Carlos Ruah transferred his activity to this hospital.³⁻⁵

Teaching Activity

Prof. Carlos Ruah started teaching at an early stage. While still in the US, he was Assistant Professor of Biology of Disease at Boston University Medical Center, where he taught medical semiology. He was awarded the title of Teaching Fellow in Neurology in 1982 and 1983. Still in the USA, he was Guest Lecturer in Oral Oncology at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine from February 1988 to May 1, 1988.⁵

Back in Portugal, he taught the class "ORL Infections in Pediatrics" of the Pediatrics course at the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Universidade Nova de Lisboa (FCM-UNL) at the invitation of Prof. Nuno Cordeiro Ferreira during the 1989/1990 academic year.⁵

On November 25 and 26, 1993, as the culmination of an already long and remarkable research career, he went on to obtain his Doctorate in Otorhinolaryngological Surgery from FCM-UNL, with the presentation of the PhD thesis: "*Evolução pós-natal da membrana do tímpano humana normal e patológica – Implicações clínicas e epidemiológicas*" ("Normal and pathological postnatal evolution of the human tympanic membrane – Clinical and epidemiological implications") and an additional monograph: "*Granuloma de colesterol no ouvido médio – Alguns aspectos sobre sua patogénese*" ("Cholesterol granuloma in the middle ear – Aspects of its pathogenesis"). He was unanimously awarded the title with the highest honours.⁵

He was an Invited Tutor with PhD, of Otorhinolaryngology at FCM-UNL, under the direction of Prof. Ruy Penha from December 15, 1993 until August 17, 1994, and was appointed Assistant Professor of this discipline on August 18, 1994, a position he held until 2008. In addition, he was a lecturer in the master's courses of Respiratory Pathology and Audiology, which were created in 1996 and 1998, respectively.⁵

Scientific Production

Prof. Carlos Ruah has a vast bibliography, having authored more than 70 original research articles, more than 200 book chapters around the world, and three published books.^{4,5}

The Legacy of Dr. Samuel Ruah

With the death of Dr. Samuel Ruah on January 15, 2016, a life of constant search for knowledge and culture was extinguished. This donation consists of a valuable collection of books in various fields of knowledge, from Humanities and Medicine to Religion, as well as a vast collection of medical and surgical material.

Most of this donation came from the Clínica Otorrinolaringológica Drs. Ruah, but some of it is obsolete material from HDE, which Dr. Samuel Ruah decided to preserve due to its historical value.^{5,7}

With the ambition of preserving this collection in the best possible way, Prof. Carlos Ruah got in touch with Prof. Amélia Ricon Ferraz, through Prof. Jorge Spratley, and the collection was transferred to the Maximiano Lemos Museum of the History of Medicine at FMUP in 2021.^{5,7}

This vast legacy was partially cataloged over two years and more than 600 hours of work, resulting in a catalog of 386 books, many of which are extremely rare, including manuscripts from the 16th century and a wide variety of rare books from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which cover topics far beyond ORL, such as War Medicine at the time of the First World War, Judaism, and the Monarchist Cause. There are also 334 items of medical and surgical equipment. Unfortunately, time constraints made it impossible to complete the cataloging effort, which the author strongly urges to be continued, due to the need to properly preserve the immense value of this collection for the History of ORL and Head and Neck Surgery, medicine in general, and for a variety of other domains, such as Judaism.

Discussion

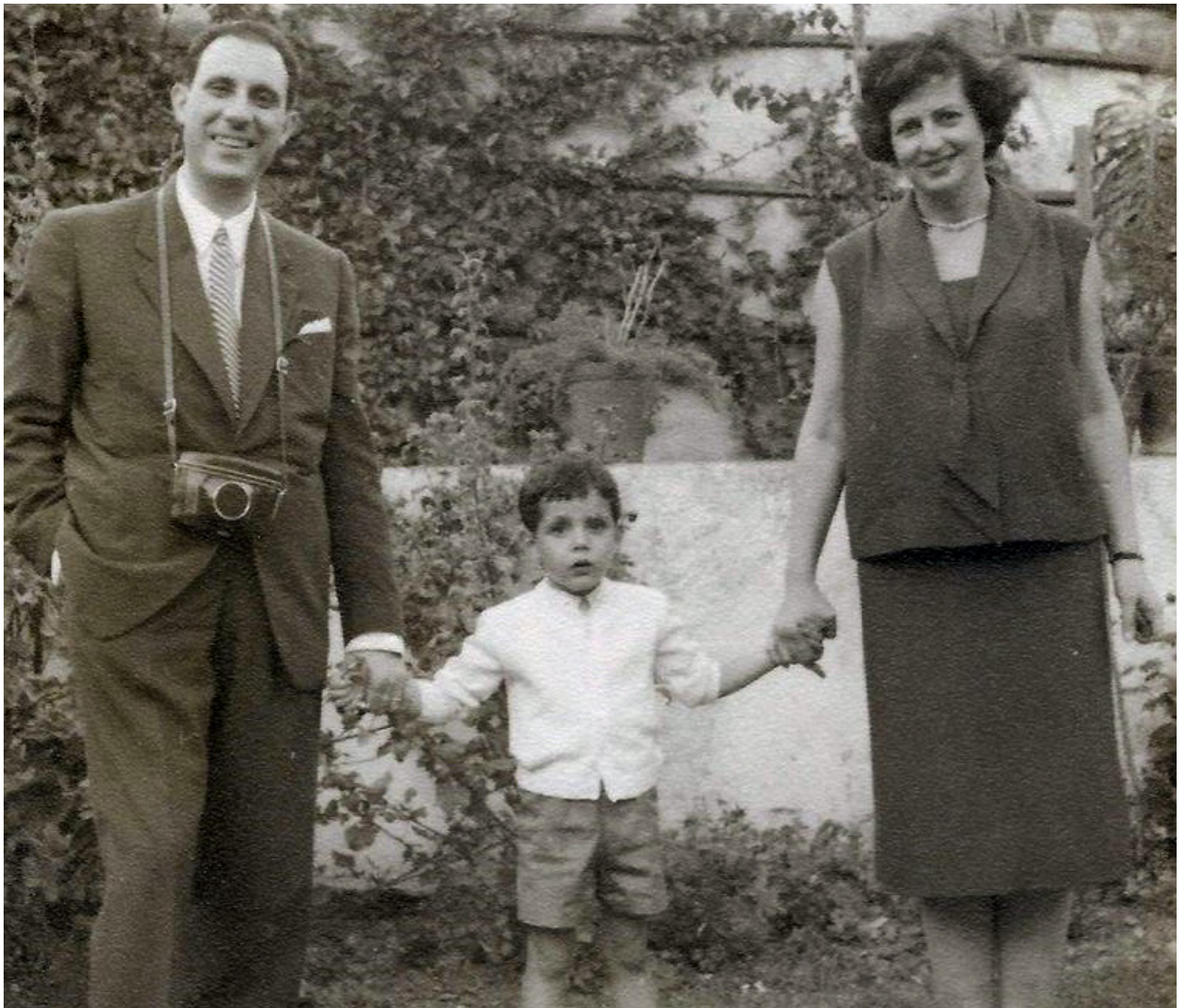
Dr. Samuel Allenby Bentes Ruah

Dr. Samuel Ruah, Physician, Director of Department, Family man, Father, and Grandfather, left a vast legacy. The author of this article had the privilege of seeing a small portion of the physical manifestations of this heritage, in the form of the donated collection, and sought, through those who were most fortunate to work, live, and learn with Dr. Samuel Ruah, to chronicle his true legacy, which is his human legacy, as described in the words of his disciple, Dr. Luísa Monteiro, "a Master, a Friend, and (for some) a second Father, always protective of his own".¹

As Director, he is remembered as someone fair, with enviable ethical and moral principles,

Figure 1

Young Carlos Ruah with his parents Samuel Ruah and Ester Buzaglo. Photo courtesy of Prof. Carlos Ruah



which were always present.^{3,5-7} He was a person who cultivated an atmosphere of support, cordiality, camaraderie, and also healthy and pleasant competition in the department. He was an assertive but supportive leader who called all the residents, and even some specialists, "my son" or "my daughter", and who encouraged his staff to develop skills they did not even realize they had.³

As a Person and Physician, he is remembered universally as someone very serious, dedicated, respected by and respectful of others. He was affable and always sought the best for his patients, and was humble enough to refer

them to clinicians who were more specialized in a particular pathology, even in his private practice. He was a man with in-depth clinical knowledge who was constantly seeking to stay up-to-date and who had a passion for old books; hence, the vast library donated by him.^{3,5-7}

As Father and Grandfather, he is remembered as someone who was strict and demanding, but also fair and kind.⁵ Although at times he had to be absent due to work commitments that often forced him to arrive home after midnight, he valued his family life a lot and was extremely proud of his five children and

grandchildren, and everything they achieved in their life.^{7,8} This was the case for Prof. Carlos Ruah, since the time when still a young man, his father took him to see his work at the Hospital.^{4,5,9} Those who knew him remember that he and Mrs. Esther Buzaglo were an extremely close couple that participated actively in each other's lives, specifically by always taking care of each other, ever since the time they fought together against tuberculosis in 1948.^{4,7}

Professor Moisés Carlos Bentes Ruah

With regard to Prof. Carlos Ruah, the author would like to emphasize that it was a great honor to meet the Professor and despite the little time they spent talking, he witnessed much of what his colleagues, friends, and family say about him, namely his humility, excellent sense of humor, good mood, kindness, cordiality, and intelligence.

He is, like his father, a man of service and dedication, with irreproachable ethical and moral values and a love for Medicine as a calling and art.^{3,6,7} He followed the footsteps of his Father and in his own words: "never had any choice but otorhinolaryngology", not because of his Father's influence but precisely because he felt comfortable with the legacy he received.^{4,5} It is unquestionable that he honored that legacy at every stage of his journey, ever since his days at the Cadaval Health Center, where, in his characteristic humility, he decided to dedicate himself almost exclusively to the study of medical theory in order to be as well prepared as possible for clinical practice.⁴ He also went through the adventure, against what was expected of him then, of specializing in the US, where he stood out among the best in the world in ORL and was able to show his genius for research, doing everything he could to bring home valuable and innovative knowledge. Upon returning to Portugal, he had to overcome difficulties during his reintegration into a National Health Service that did not seem to have a place for physicians trained abroad.^{4,6} His competence and sagacity allowed him to overcome the

obstacles and he started working at Egas Moniz Hospital, where, in addition to actively promoting the dissemination of scientific knowledge, he developed a residency program that was ahead of its time, giving his residents the autonomy and confidence to learn, understand, and succeed.⁶ This brilliant journey also included the Clínica Otorrinolaringológica Drs. Rua and Lusíadas Hospital, where, as in any other workplace, he proved to be, in the words of his disciple, Prof. Clara Capucho: a very attentive and perceptive physician, who listens attentively to the patient, with great tranquility and calm, a person who is supremely intelligent, brilliant, very humane, and has the utmost concern for his patients.⁶

He is a professor, researcher, physician, teacher, colleague, friend of many, and respected by many more; however, the most important role for him is that of a husband, son, and father. As a father (and like his father), despite often having less time than he would have liked to spend with his family, he was always present and did, and still does, everything to encourage his offspring.^{3,6,7}

Figure 2
Prof. Carlos Ruah and Dr. Samuel Ruah at the signing of their book. Photo courtesy of Prof. Carlos Ruah



Conclusion

More than 33 years separate the start of the careers of these two physicians, father and son. As all those interviewed by the author have pointed out, there have been huge advances between the two generations, in terms of technology, science, technique, and ease of access to information.^{3,6,7} These facts are reflected in the documental and instrumental collection donated to the Maximiano Lemos Museum of the History of Medicine at FMU. However, the core thought of Prof. Jorge Spratley is that "they have in common the empathy, those who aspire to be good physicians must have an innate spirit of empathy, of sacrifice, and these two people we've talked about are fantastic examples of that, each in their own generation".⁷

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

Data Confidentiality

The authors declare having followed the protocols in use at their working center regarding patients' data publication.

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Availability of scientific data

There are no datasets available, publicly related to this work.

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