

Dr. Jose F. Tellez-Zenteno - In Memoriam

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doi:10.1017/cjn.2020.227

Can J Neurol Sci. 2021; 48: 578

Jose F. Tellez-Zenteno, MD, PhD, Head of the Epilepsy Program at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, passed away on October 2nd, 2020. Jose was born in Mexico and earned his medical degree at the National University of Mexico (UNAM) in 1996. He then completed specialty training in internal medicine and in neurology at the National Institute of Medical Sciences and Nutrition “Salvador Zubirán” in Mexico City. During that time, he also obtained a PhD in Clinical Epidemiology. In 2003, Jose and his family moved to Canada to train in Epilepsy and electroencephalography (EEG), first at the London Health Sciences Center in London, Ontario, and subsequently at the Foothills Medical Center in Calgary, Alberta. He thereafter joined the Division of Neurology at the University of Saskatchewan, where he soon became Director of the Epilepsy Program, a position he occupied until his untimely death.

When Jose moved to the University of Saskatchewan, it became rapidly clear that he had extraordinary administrative and leadership skills. He built the adult epilepsy program, and importantly, the epilepsy surgery program in Saskatoon. His relatively fast and smooth progression through the academic ranks brought him to the position of Full Professor in 2013.

His primary research focus was on the Epidemiology of the Epilepsies, and his systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and studies on the epidemiology and comorbidities of epilepsy became world renown. He was a prolific writer, publishing more than 160 peer-reviewed articles, and his research was funded by a number of regional and national agencies. He was awarded the prestigious Bruce Schoenberg International Award in Neuroepidemiology by the American Academy of Neurology, the Mudjadik Thyssen Mining Professorship in Neuroscience by the Royal University Hospital Foundation in Saskatoon, the National Researcher Award by the Mexican National Council of Science and Technology, and The Clinical Practice and Advocacy Award from the Canadian League Against Epilepsy (CLAE).

Jose was an engaging and popular speaker at epilepsy meetings, not only at the national level but also mainly internationally. He



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served on the Board of Directors of the CLAE, the Canadian Society of Clinical Neurophysiology – becoming its President, and the Canadian Board of Registered EEG Technologists. He also served in different committees and Task Forces of the International League Against Epilepsy, in editorial boards of a number of scientific journals, and he contributed to the creation of guidelines for the management of epilepsy.

Jose had a passion for education and was known for his skill in communicating with patients, students, colleagues, and friends. He had a deep appreciation for life and an unsurpassed sense of humor. He was a great soccer player, and was an avid lover of art, particularly paintings from Mexican artists. He was deeply loved by his clinical team whom he treated as family.

His untimely death is an extraordinary loss to all his patients, to the University of Saskatchewan and to national and international epileptology. For us, his friends and colleagues, the sense of sadness and irreparable loss is profound. We are privileged to have known such a remarkable human being. He made us all better. We will miss him.

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RECEIVED OCTOBER 4, 2020. DATE OF ACCEPTANCE OCTOBER 6, 2020.

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