Eusebio Guajardo Zambrano (1870-1939): Visionary of modern medicine in Mexico

Armando H. Ortiz-Guerrero¹, José A. Olvera-Sandoval¹, Gilberto Treviño-Martínez², and Carlos E. Medina-De la Garza^{3,4}

¹School of Medicine, Sala Histórica "Dr. Ángel Óscar Ulloa Gregori"; ²Pediatrics Department; ³Immunology Service, University Hospital "Dr. J.E. González"; ⁴Center for Research and Development in Health Sciences (CIDICS). Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Monterrey, Mexico

...and is it not a dream which none of you remember having dreamt, that builded your city and fashioned all there is in it?

(G. Khalil Gibran, *the Prophet*)

Introduction

Medical education in the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico, started in the XIX century with an early attempt by Italian physician Pascual Costanza (1789-1859) to establish a medical chair in 1829. Thirty years later, in October 1859, José Eleuterio González (1813-1888) founded the *School of Medicine of Monterrey* and began the official teaching of Medicine in the state. In spite of great efforts of its founder and disciples to nourish and keep it working, this pioneering school struggled for survival and was closed in 1899 and reopened in 1912. However, difficulties to keep the school alive continued. State authorities wanted it definitely closed but practitioners and professors strived to keep it opened and growing. Among the latter, a figure of particular relevance is Eusebio Guajardo Zambrano (Fig. 1), whose personal and institutional endeavor sustained the survival of the school. Further, Guajardo's visionary and innovative ideas helped to establish medical academia and provided the groundwork for the successful development of

Figure 1. Dr. Eusebio Guajardo Zambrano (1870-1939). Photo: historical Archive FM.

what is today the School of Medicine of Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of his birth, we present an account of his life and work.

Correspondence:

*Carlos E. Medina-De la Garza
E-mail: carlos.medina@uanl.mx

Date of reception: 25-07-2020

Date of acceptance: 05-08-2020

DOI: 10.24875/RMU.20000070

Available online: 30-10-2020

Medicina Universitaria. 2020;22(3):131-135

www.medicinauniversitaria.org

1665-5796/© 2020 Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. Published by Permanyer. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Early years and medical studies

Eusebio Guajardo Zambrano was born at Hacienda de Santa Rosa, in the town of San Francisco de Apodaca, Nuevo Leon State, Mexico, on August 11th, 1870, the son of Mr. Lázaro Guajardo and Mrs. Francisca Zambrano¹. There are some doubts about the date, however, his birth certificate and familiar documents confirm the former date¹⁻⁴. He had his elementary education in Apodaca and then moved to nearby Monterrey in 1883. He entered Medical School in 1889 and still as a medical student, young Guajardo joined the teaching staff of Civil College in 1893 as instructor of Natural History as Dr. Pedro Noriega (1855-1901) was director of the College^{3,4}. He graduated as Physician-Surgeon on December 5th, 1895, and started his practice in Monterrey, registered, and authorized by the City Health Council which listed him as a physician practicing at a *Botica* (Pharmacy) at Guerrero Street 720 north, a praxis address he kept his whole life.

Meanwhile, the Medical School of Monterrey was closed in February 1899. When the reopening of the school was decreed in August 1912, Dr. Eusebio Guajardo was appointed academic secretary, but never took office. After the triumph of Francisco Madero's revolutionary movement, of which Guajardo was a sympathizer, he became member of the Monterrey City Council in 1912. However, counter-revolution headed by Victoriano Huerta seized the presidency and thus Guajardo left the country and moved to Kingsville, Texas (Fig. 2). During his time in the United States, he obtained a postgraduate Degree in Pediatrics in Austin, Texas, anticipating almost 15 years to the start of medical specialization in Mexico^{3,4}. Guajardo returned to Monterrey in 1916 and took the Chair of Pathology and Children's Clinic at the School in September 1917.

First appointment as director: 1918-1919

Being Governor of the State of Nuevo Leon Mr. Nicéforo Zambrano, Dr. Guajardo, now 48, first assumed the direction of the School of Medicine in July 1918 after the death of the second Director Dr. Juan de Dios Treviño (1838-1918)^{5,6}. That year the medical course started with 20 students, and Guajardo sent to the State Congress a proposal for additional reforms to bylaws of the school, which had been enacted in October 1917⁷. He also updated the syllabus and promoted the construction of an anatomy amphitheater and a clinical diagnostic laboratory. In the 1919, he reported a staff of 10 professors and enrollment of 26 students⁷.

Figure 2. Dr. Guajardo and his family in Kingsville, Texas, USA. circa 1913. Photo: family archive/historical archive FM.

Since its reopening amidst the revolution war, the school had had a low enrollment (at times < 10 students) due to prevailing social turmoil. Indeed, the reasons for the closure in 1899 were high costs of maintenance and low student enrollment. In his first administration, Dr. Guajardo had no opportunity to change this situation. At the end of 1919, he handed over the direction to Dr. Francisco Garza Cantú. He was then appointed director of Hospital Gonzalez for the time between 1921 and 1924. In July 1921, he headed the Mexican delegation to attend the International Child Protection Congress in Brussels, where he was appointed Vice-President of the conference and presented his lecture "Teething Accidents observed in Mexico." After the conference, he extended his stay to visit the modern hospitals of Europe. Returning to Mexico, he informed through the *Bulletin of Public Health* and in a booklet the results and relevant resolutions of the Congress^{8,9}. The following year he was speaker at the Mexican National Congress of Medicine in Saltillo, Coahuila, and attended the Fourth National Congress of Pediatrics in Mexico City.

Second and third appointments as director, 1924-1925/1927-1928

In the 1920s, conditions of medical school remained precarious. Dr. Jesus García Segura (1906-1971), a disciple of Guajardo refers: "since the number of students was very small, not even reaching twenty souls, the state government considered the possibility of granting them all a scholarship, so they could continue studying medicine in the school at Mexico City"³. Once again, the decision to close the School of Medicine was made. Nevertheless, Dr. Guajardo raised his voice

against it. He stated “...the School of Medicine must not be closed for any reason, and I am committed to demonstrate that such closure is a major mistake, and to prove it with facts that the School must be kept alive”^{2,3}.

In this state of affairs, in January 1924, he resumed the direction of the school, appointed by Governor Porfirio G. González. In the report of 1923-1924 school year, he describes: “...lectures started one month after the date indicated by the Law. As we start we had 21 students registered, and later on we registered another eight students”¹⁰. Guajardo refurbished the amphitheater and requested the removal of the Health Council offices from the facilities of the School. In May 1924, he presented Governor González, a new proposal for by-laws of the school, which, he stated, “will be as good as the best organized schools in our republic”¹⁰ and also anticipated the future creation of a University Hospital as a teaching facility. Ethical education of students was also a matter of great concern to him “There is no other profession requiring greater assessment of the conduct of its members than medicine. Our society demands medical professionals to comply with higher standards, and so should it be...”

In October 1924, he requested and received from the Ministry of Education the blueprints for a new building for the school. In February 1925, he sent a letter to the Dean of the National University, Alfonso Pruneda, in which he proposed to convene a board of directors and delegates from all the medical schools in Mexico. This proposal was postponed due to ongoing reforms at the National University, but this advanced concept can be considered a forerunner for an association of medical schools, similar to the current Mexican Association of Faculties and Schools of Medicine created in 1986.

The enrollment increased from 25 to 29 students. Dr. Guajardo's dynamic management at this stage served to defuse the closure threat¹⁰. In October 1925, he handed over the Direction to Dr. Jesús María Saldaña. For the 1925-1926 school year, improvements to the school continued, with the help of a Board of Trustees that contributed \$ 1115.73, granted to the school as Dr. Guajardo was still on office.

In 1927, he returned to the direction of the school and was involved in the organization of the VII National Medical Congress in Monterrey⁶ where students from the School also participated as speakers. That year Dr. Guajardo appeared listed as a member of the Mexican Medical Association in Monterrey. In April 1928, he drafted a bill referred to Governor of Nuevo Leon, General Aarón Sáenz. That proposal contained the core,

concept, and purpose of the medical school, which has been a guideline until modern times. The project included the creation of an Institute of Medical Sciences, which should comprise the creation of a modern hospital dependent on the school, for the practice of students. Furthermore, it proposed the obligation for a social service time for medical students on graduation. These progressive project and ideas were not realized at that time. A major change achieved was the attachment of the nursing school to the medical school.

Fourth appointment as director, 1934-1938

In 1933, the University of Nuevo Leon was created with the merge of several schools and colleges, among them the medical one. The university project underwent many difficulties and its early history can be consulted in other sources. In that *status quo*, Dr. Eusebio Guajardo assumed again, for the longest and last time the direction of the now School of Medicine. Pablo Quiroga had become substitute governor, after the resignation of Francisco A. Cárdenas due to many conflicts generated by the creation of the university. The construction of the new Hospital Gonzalez to become the Civil Hospital of the city had already started in 1933. In the atmosphere of unease that prevailed in the emerging and fragile University of Nuevo León, Dr. Guajardo continued his effort to modernize medical education. Furthermore, in February 1934, the school sent to the Council of Higher Culture, institution which was holding place of the temporarily closed University of Nuevo Leon, a list of candidates for its direction. The list was headed by Doctor Guajardo, who was confirmed as Director and took office on February 15th ¹¹. One of his goals was the construction of a new building for the school. On behalf of the State Government, Guajardo traveled to the United States in May 1934 to visit medical schools and observe teaching methods, equipment, and administration models¹¹. He visited Tulane University in New Orleans, Northeastern University in Chicago, and Western Reserve University in Cleveland. In his reports, Dr. Guajardo considered noteworthy that the number of students who entered the schools was limited, as had be proposed for the school. He also reported on the work and cooperation between schools and hospitals for teaching purposes. The Rockefeller Foundation of New York gave him a complete collection of information from many medical schools around the world¹¹. The report and ideas of Dr. Guajardo after this visit can be considered as precedent of the school-hospital concept, which some

Figure 3. Eusebio Guajardo's booklet on care of children "To Family's Mother." This is the third issue from 1922. It was last published in 1937. Historical archive FM.

years later was further developed and endowed by Dr. Angel Martínez Villarreal, who also added the concept of a departmental structure for the school^{12,13}. Besides, this can also be considered as the beginning of the idea for a conversion from the French to the American medical teaching model. Dr. Guajardo created a Pro-School of Medicine Committee for the construction of the new building, with Governor Quiroga and Monterrey's Mayor Plutarco Elias Calles Jr. as honorary presidents.

In December 1935, he sent to new Governor Gregorio Morales Sánchez, a bill for the construction of the new school building, where he also proposed a tax adjustment to financially support the project. In addition, for the 1st time in its history, the school considered to limit the entry of students due to insufficient facilities, proposing a maximum of 40. However, the State Government determined that 90 should be accepted, so this initial attempt to regulate enrollment failed. There were many efforts by Dr. Guajardo for the construction of the

Figure 4. Actual aerial view of health sciences campus of Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León in Monterrey, Mexico. The University Hospital stands front center and the Faculty of Medicine to the right.

new building, although he did not live enough to see his dream come true. The current building of the school was dedicated in November 1952⁵ the same year the Civil Hospital was finally handed over to the school and became officially University Hospital, the first of its kind in Mexico.

The social service of graduates

The project for an Institute of Medical Sciences included the commitment of the interns who had been exempted from school fees, to work for 6 months in a rural municipality designated by the Governor. This was the first attempt to establish a social service in the state. This duty had been introduced by the National University of Mexico and Dr. Guajardo requested graduates from his school to be included in such program¹¹. In June 1937, it was proposed to make social service a part of the syllabus "to improve hygienic conditions of rural towns and achieve a better practical training of graduates." However, the intention to start such program in 1937-1938 was not fulfilled because of lack of resources. The first group of interns for this duty, a pioneer step in the *provinces* was assigned in June 1939, 3 months after Dr. Guajardo's death. His project was practically followed to the letter, under the leadership of his successor and disciple, Dr. Jesús García Segura.

This last directive administration of Dr. Guajardo was responsible for a remarkable increase of enrollment, from 133 students in 1934 to 193 in 1937¹¹. In that year, Dr. Guajardo asked permission to leave because of health reasons, but neither professors nor students accepted his full resignation³ so he was appointed Honorary Director and President of the School of Medicine Council.

Death and legacy

Dr. Eusebio Guajardo died at 6.00 pm at his home on April 7th, 1939, surrounded by his wife Mrs. Adelaida Zambrano de Guajardo and his four children. His funeral was attended by many government officials, academics, politicians, and plain citizens, evidence of the high regard he had in Monterrey's society^{6,14}. His remains were buried in El Carmen Cemetery. After his death, there were intense efforts to request the government to declare him outstanding citizen of the state. For unclear reasons, it never happened. Dr. Eusebio Guajardo belonged to the Lodge "Obreros del Silencio" (Craftsmen of Silence) and occupied the distinguished position of Grand Master in the hierarchy of Freemasonry⁶. One Lodge in Monterrey bears his name, as did a street in Monterrey¹⁵. In addition to his abundant written participation in medical events and scientific journals, Dr. Guajardo was known for his didactic brochure "To Family's Mothers" dealing in detail with different issues of infant feeding¹⁶.

The prolific life of Eusebio Guajardo was committed to the School of Medicine, pediatrics and to service his fellow men and women not only through medicine but also his visionary ideas. It is fair to say one of his greatest achievement was to prevent the closure of the medical school, successfully struggling against the establishment and the bureaucracy of that time, which was unclear about medical sciences and education. This action was to have a future impact at local, regional, and national level, for the emerging School of Medicine and the "Dr. José Eleuterio Gonzalez" University Hospital of Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon became a reference for medicine in Northeast Mexico. It has graduated more than 19500 physicians, 2200 clinical chemists and 5000 medical Specialists, Masters and Doctors to date. The School of Medicine and University Hospital became the cornerstone of medical sciences for Monterrey. One hundred and fifty years after his birth, both hospital and school, together with the Faculties of Dentistry, Nursing, Psychology, Nutrition, and Public Health, the primary care University-Staff Clinic, the Multidisciplinary Research Center for Research and Development in Health Sciences, the University Health-Program Center and the new Advanced Medicine Hospital – HAEMA, the Health

Sciences Campus of UANL (Fig. 4) represent indeed the fulfillment of Dr. Guajardo's dream for an Institute of Medical Sciences to serve the city and country.

Acknowledgments

We thank Lic. Nancy Veronica Gallegos-Jimenez and Lic. Juanita Cristerna-Ramírez of the Dr. Ángel Óscar Ulloa Gregori *Sala Histórica* of the School of Medicine, UANL, from the Historical Archive, and Mr. Steve Ojeda Valdez from Monterrey City Street Department.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Financing

This historical research did not have any external source of financing.

References

1. Zambrano N. Birth Certificate Issued in 1917 by the Governor, Bearing Witness of the entry in the Proceedings of Civil Registration of Year 1870, Town of Apodaca. Nuevo León, México: State of Nuevo Leon general Archive; 1997.
2. Navarro J. Eusebio Guajardo en mi Recuerdo. Monterrey: El Porvenir; 1968.
3. García-Segura J. Dr. Eusebio Guajardo. Revista Médica de Nuevo León. 1959;1(2).
4. Livas-Villarreal EC. Apuntes biográficos del Dr. Eusebio Guajardo. Anales Inst. Invest. Cient. 1944;1(1).
5. Torres-Hernández M. Memorias. Monterrey: Facultad de Medicina; 1952. p. 52.
6. Apuntes biográficos del Dr Eusebio Guajardo. Monterrey. El Porvenir. 1948.
7. Guajardo E. Report of the Director. Nuevo Leon: School of Medicine of Nuevo Leon; 1920.
8. Guajardo E. Informe del Segundo Congreso Internacional Para la Protección de la Infancia, Reunido en Bruselas del 18 al 21 de julio de 1921. Monterrey: El Modelo, S.A; 1921. p. 38.
9. Alanís-Rufino CM. En el niño está el porvenir de la Patria. La institucionalización de la atención médica infantil. Ciudad de México 1920-1934. PhD Thesis. Instituto de Investigaciones José María Luis Mora. México; 2010.
10. Guajardo E. Report of Director. Nuevo Leon: School of Medicine of Nuevo Leon; 1925.
11. Guajardo E. Report of Director. Nuevo Leon: School of Medicine of Nuevo Leon; 1937.
12. Martínez-Villarreal A. En Defensa del Hospital Escuela y de las Leyes que lo Hacen Factible en Nuevo León. México: Universidad de Nuevo León; 1944.
13. Livas-Villarreal EC. El Dr. Ángel Martínez Villarreal y la Facultad de Medicina. Rev Med NL. 1959;1(3).
14. El Dr. Eusebio Guajardo. Monterrey. El Porvenir. 1939.
15. Covarrubias R. "Dr. Eusebio Guajardo". Las Calles de Monterrey. Monterrey, 1949;227-234.
16. Guajardo E. A las Madres de Familia. 3rd ed. Monterrey. Author's Edition. 1922. pp. 78.