

Interview to Professor Juan Antonio Barcia on a Spanish pioneer of SRS, Juan Luis Barcia Salorio

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What triggered your father's interest for radiosurgery? Which activities was he focusing on at the time and what support did he receive from his colleagues?

After finishing his medical studies, he went to study stereotaxy with professor Riechert in Freiburg and from there, he knew about the work of professor Leksell. Then, he received a scholarship to study in Stockholm and Uppsala in 1957 where he learned the pioneering work of Leksell in radiosurgery.

When he returned to Spain, he designed his own stereotactic instrument, based on Leksell's concept, but with a special feature which permitted making stereotactic x-ray tomograms. Then, he adapted his stereoencephalotome to perform radiosurgery using a single 60-cobalt source with lead collimators, because this was the only gamma ray source available at the University of Valencia at this time. Together with the physicist Gregorio Hernández, he started treating patients on Saturday evenings, the only time the source was available.

How was he received by the Spanish neurosurgery of the time?

With incredulity. When he presented his results at the local congresses, he was regarded as an "inventor". Only when the technique was established in Europe and North America did the rest of the Spanish centers begin to adopt it.

What is, in your opinion, the significance of the developments resulting from your father's contribution?

His main contributions, apart from the developing of the concept of the single source method, were the application of radiosurgery to carotid cavernous fistulae and drug resistant epilepsy. Today, functional radiosurgery is an established area among radiosurgical indications.

How do you envision the future of radiosurgery in Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries?

It is growing very fast and extending to practically all the Latin American countries, thanks to the scientific guidance of Kita Sallabanda, president of the Spanish Society of Neurosurgery and Antonio De Salles, president of Latin American Society of Radiosurgery. These countries will be contributing to the new developments in the radiosurgery.