

Three(!) Generations of Rheumatologists: Only in Argentina

By Cecilia Catoggio, MD; and Luis J. Catoggio MD, PhD

Luis: It is an unforeseen privilege to be asked to discuss our family's three generations of rheumatologists for our Canadian colleagues. My father, a grandchild of poor Italian immigrants to Argentina, trained in rheumatology right after the Second World War with Dr. Walter Bauer at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston. He was a fellow there when the lupus erythematosus (LE) cell was first described and cortisone first used in rheumatoid arthritis (RA) by Philip Hench at the Mayo. He participated in the famous International Congress held at the Waldorf Astoria in New York in 1949 when cortisone was first introduced, both as a fellow and as an English-Spanish translator.

Upon return to Argentina at age 30, and with this training, he went back to the University Hospital and became one of the founders of "modern" rheumatology in Argentina. He eventually became Chief of Rheumatology at an important suburban hospital and then Director of the local rheumatology national institute of health (NIH) when these were created in 1958. (Ten years later, these were dissolved by one of our military governments!)

He returned to the University Hospital and worked there and in private practice until his untimely death at the age of 68 from prostatic carcinoma.

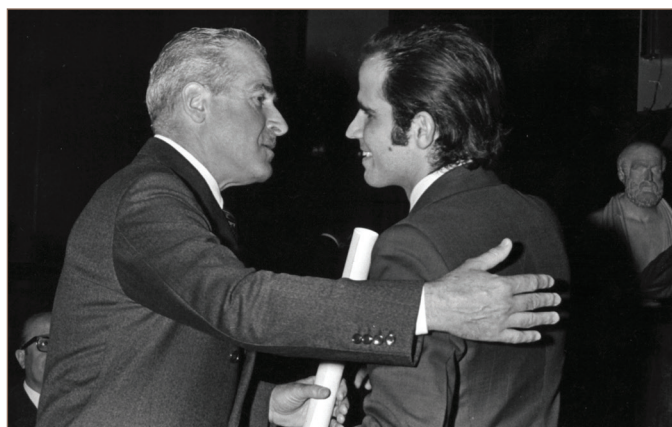
I wanted to be a doctor since around the age of five, probably impressed by my dad. I did not want to specialize in rheumatology but was more or less "forced" to do so, if I wanted to stay at the *Hospital Italiano*, where I had been Resident and Chief Resident in Medicine – so much for "multiple choices"!

I trained for almost three years in Bath, UK, at the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, mentored by people such as Drs. Peter Maddison, Allan St. J Dixon, Paul Bacon and Paul Dieppe. I have never regretted it! Our first daughter was born there, later to become a rheumatologist herself!

Upon return to the Hospital Italiano, over the years, I managed to grow the rheumatology section from a one-person team to a group of six consultants and six fellows-in-training at the time I stepped down as Chief a few years ago. I remain active in the section, am an Associate Professor of Medicine at our hospital's medical school and am one of the chairs of the PhD program at the institution.



Drs. Walter Bauer and Pedro Catoggio in Argentina in 1954.



Dr. Luis Catoggio receiving his MD diploma from Pedro Catoggio in 1976.



Dr. Cecilia Catoggio receiving her MD diploma from her parents, Dr. Luis Catoggio and Dr. Patricia Gonzalez Salas de Catoggio, in 2007.

Our eldest daughter, Cecilia, the “Bathonian”, decided to study medicine when she was about to end high school. But I will let her tell her own story!

Cecilia: I had always wanted to be a veterinarian, but after visiting and helping out at an underprivileged rural school with a doctor back in high school, I decided to study medicine. I did my residency in Internal Medicine at the *Hospital Italiano* because I liked the integral approach to the patient, but I knew I wanted to specialize in something. I grew up hearing about rheumatology, and finally understood why it is such an attractive specialty. I believe it has the perfect balance between in- and out-patients, and encompasses everything from clinical medicine to molecular biology. I did my rheumatology fellowship at another hospital, *Centro de Educación Médica e Investigaciones Clínicas (CEMIC)* to follow my own path. I completed my fellowship two years ago and have remained as a staff member. In the middle of the fellowship, I had my first

child, and a year ago my second, so I am learning how to be both a doctor and a mom, enjoying every day as much as I can!

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