

## *In Memoriam*

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# In Memoriam – Juan Valentín Comas, MD, PhD: 13 May, 1960–16 June, 2015

Received: 13 July 2015; Accepted: 13 July 2015

Friends and colleagues:



The unexpected and untimely death of our friend and colleague Juan Comas was heartbreaking news for all who knew him and a great loss to our specialty and mission. Despite his own health issues, Juan worked tirelessly to improve paediatric cardiac surgery in Spain, as well in less-fortunate parts of the world. His academic initiatives with EACTS and elsewhere were always well conceived and very much appreciated. Juan was Catalanian by birth, and forever, but worked most of his career in Madrid. He trained in Spain, France, England, and Australia. He was fluent in four languages, and had an impressive knowledge of and love for art, music, and sports. His laid back personal style masked a formidable intellect, as well as a great sense of humour and irony. Juan was also a devoted family man, and he leaves his wife Montserrat and young son Jan. Needless to say, we will all miss Juan and remember him with great affection.

*Tom R. Karl  
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Dear friends,

June 16 was a day that for me was charged with too much emotion. I knew Juan since 1993, we spent time together as both residents and as staff surgeons, but more so as good friends. Only a few people knew that Juan was unwell and he had undergone two open-heart operations in his life. He did not want people to know about that because he did not like to complain. At the same time, Juan was always generous with people, starting with me. I spoke to him just on Monday, the 15th of June – the night before his death. Despite his own issues, he was worried about me, because he had not been able to reach me!

I could write a book or perhaps a good theatre piece about Juan and I. Even if sometimes we had a different point of view, Juan was more than just a colleague. I had the privilege to work with a very good friend, and we spent fantastic years together in Madrid. We learnt an enormous amount of things together, always trying to maintain a good sense of humour to minimise all the tensions that can appear in the cardiac surgical work environment.

At Juan's funeral, I was really devastated. Even though I knew a lot about Juan's health problems, I never expected that he would die at the age of 55. Somehow, and fortunately, there appeared to be a lot of serenity among the members of Juan's family, everyone was more spiritual than I could have possibly imagined. Yet, despite the days that have passed, it remains very difficult for me.

Best regards my friends.

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