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Editorial

A Homage to Professor Adolpho Hoirsch (1930-2023), a luminary of Brazilian Psychiatry, and his humanitarian and public commitment

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A Homage to Professor Adolpho Hoirisch (1930-2023), a luminary of Brazilian Psychiatry, and his humanitarian and public commitment

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Professor Adolpho Hoirisch, a distinguished figure in all fields of Psychiatry, passed away recently, leaving behind a remarkable legacy that spans a lifetime of contributions to these disciplines. He was born on May 22, 1930, in Bento Ribeiro, a tranquil neighborhood in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His parents, Nathan and Perlea Hoirisch, were Jewish immigrants from Bessarabia, a region marked by a turbulent history. Nestled between powerful and chronically warring neighbors, such as Russia and Romania, the population of Bessarabia found themselves caught in the crossfire. They were often forbidden from speaking Russian during Russian occupation and Romanian during Romanian control. The history and geography of Bessarabia played a pivotal role in shaping young Adolpho's mindset and activities.

The tumultuous history of his parents' homeland instilled in him a deep appreciation for justice, freedom, and the fundamental rights of individuals. This profound sense of justice, influenced by the injustices he witnessed during the dictatorship of the "Estado Novo" era in Brazil when the political police brutally invaded his family's home, searching for evidence of his father's alleged communist ties, left an enduring mark on Adolpho Hoirisch. These experiences

fueled his unwavering commitment to the principles of human rights and social justice, which became integral to his professional life.

Adolpho Hoirisch studied in the nearby Colégio Souza Marques and graduated from high school in 1948. Although his family has been involved in commerce and banking in Europe, he opted to become a physician and managed to enroll at the prestigious Faculdade Nacional de Medicina (National School of Medicine). While in medical school, he trained under the supervision of noted psychiatrists, like Professors Mauricio de Medeiros and José Leme Lopes. He graduated from medical school in 1954. Already fully enthralled by Psychiatry, he decided in 1955, against the advice of his mother (who wanted him to pursue a career as a laboratory physician), to become a trainee in the renowned psychiatry training program sponsored by the National Division of Mental Central (DINSAM) of the Brazilian Ministry of Health in the Psychiatric Center D. Pedro II. After completing the one-year training, Adolpho Hoirisch was invited to join the psychiatry training program, this time as a faculty.

Adolpho Hoirisch started to build a career in the public sector in 1955 when he joined the DINSAM as a psychiatrist stationed at the Heitor Carrilho Judicial Asylum. There, he delved into the minds of mentally deranged criminal offenders and conducted assessments of criminal responsibility and dangerousness. From 1958 to 1962, he served in the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) as a medical officer specializing in neuro-psychiatry.

In 1965, Adolpho Hoirisch took the first steps to pursue an academic career in Psychiatry. He contacted Professor Leme Lopes, the head of the Institute of Psychiatry of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), and

volunteered to work as an unpaid clinical instructor. The next year, however, a new federal law unexpectedly promoted all clinical instructors to assistant professors and thus consolidated Adolpho Hoirisch's lifelong commitment to the UFRJ.

In 1970, Adolpho Hoirisch completed his psychoanalytic training and became an associate member of the Psychoanalytic Society of Rio de Janeiro (SPRJ). Four years later, he achieved the prestigious status of full member and teaching analyst of the SPRJ.

Also in 1970, Adolpho Hoirisch was awarded a Senior Lecturer ("Livredocência") in Psychiatry by the UFRJ. To achieve this top university degree, the candidate must demonstrate that she or he fulfills the university's set criteria of excellence in research and teaching. A precondition is the publication of numerous research articles during the preceding years. Besides that, the process of habilitation includes a written exam, a public lecture, and the submission of a doctoral thesis followed by a *viva voce* examination.

The next achievement of Adolpho Hoirisch was his appointment to become the first-ever Full Professor of Medical Psychology at the UFRJ after a very competitive public selection process against some of the most brilliant minds in the field in the city of Rio de Janeiro. His thesis for the selective process for Full Professor, "The Question of Medical Identity," dealt with the challenges that physicians face when relinquishing their professional roles when they get sick. This was an ahead-of-time, revolutionary subject that only decades later would be given the due acknowledgment.

The newly created Medical Psychology chair required a new type of psychiatrists and specialists in mental health and it was up to Professor Adolpho Hoirisch to select, train, and supervise them. He created and directed a pioneering service of Medical Psychology at the University Hospital Clementino Fraga Filho of the UFRJ which provided psychiatric and psychological assessment and treatment for the in- and outpatients as well as for the medical staff. Professor Adolfo Hoirisch also gave particular attention to the psychological needs of the medical students. He instituted the Psychopaedagogical and Professional Guidance Program (POPPE) of the School of Medicine da UFRJ aiming to help troubled medical students to overcome evolutive crises and doubts about personal, vocational, and sexual identity and, thus, regain their pleasure in learning, as well as correct deficits in their learning process ¹. Again, this was an ahead-of-time subject that only more recently was given due acknowledgment ².

In 1988, Professor Adolpho Hoirisch was elected a full member of the Brazilian National Academy of Medicine (Figure 1), thus cementing his place among the most distinguished physicians in Brazil. As a prerequisite for acceptance into the National Academy of Medicine, he submitted a memoir entitled "The Psychiatric Implications of Iatrogenesis". He occupied the chair # 46, which had Afrânio Peixoto as patron.

Figure 1. Emeritus Professor Adolpho Hoirisch during one of his lectures in the National Academy of Medicine, Brazil, in 2011.



Professor Adolpho Hoirisch was also affiliated with numerous national and international scientific societies, such as the Rio de Janeiro Psychiatric Association, the Brazilian Psychiatric Association, the World Psychiatric Association, the Psychoanalytic Society of Rio de Janeiro, and the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), among others. He was also a full member of the Brazilian Academy of Military Medicine.

During his academic and professional career, Professor Hoirisch conducted a series of important studies that significantly contributed to the fields

of psychiatry and medicine. Some of his notable works include "*Freud y las vicisitudes de una sociedad psicoanalítica*"³, "From the viewpoint of a psychiatric community: The hospital"⁴, "L'unité psychiatrique comme corps étranger dans l'hôpital général"⁵, "Psiquiatria e violência"⁶, "Termos médicos e mitologia greco-romana"⁷, "O paradigma psicossomático: visão de um psiquiatra"⁸, and "O paradigma psicossomático: visão de um psiquiatra"⁹. These studies demonstrated his dedication to advancing our understanding of mental health and the intricate relationship between psychological and medical disciplines. In his work, Adolpho Hoirisch exhibited a rare combination of academic rigor and genuine compassion for the individuals under his care.

Even after retiring from the UFRJ, Adolpho Hoirisch continued to contribute to the field of psychiatry by joining the faculty of the Gama Filho Medical School where he and his assistants spent a decade lecturing on psychiatry, mental health, and medical psychology. His passion for education remained undiminished, and he generously shared his knowledge and expertise with the next generation of medical professionals. He was also a very active member of the special committee of the Regional Board of Medicine of the State of Rio de Janeiro (CREMERJ) whose main goal was to address the mental health of doctors. In 2013, he received a much-deserved honor from UFRJ, which awarded him the title of Professor Emeritus. This was an acknowledgment of his lifelong commitment to the fields of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Medical Education, his devotion to the psychological well-being of individuals, from criminal offenders to medical students, and his exploration of the intricacies of the issue of identity - fostered by his family's history and his own experiences - that have much enriched our understanding of the integrality of the human being.

Professor Adolpho Hoirisch was a remarkable individual whose life was dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, the betterment of society, and the advancement of the medical and psychiatric fields. He was a passionate advocate for justice, human rights, and the well-being of individuals. His contributions, both as a practitioner and educator, have left an indelible mark, and his legacy will continue to inspire future generations in the realms of psychiatry and medicine. He was also a very warm individual, an inspiring teacher, a charming conversationalist, an exceptional joke teller, and a true friend to his friends. We, his former disciples and, later, junior colleagues, will miss him dearly.

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