

Ismael Mena, MD, 1928–2015

Ismael Mena, MD, former chief of nuclear medicine at Harbor–University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Medical Center (Torrance), died peacefully on January 15 at his home in Santiago, Chile, surrounded by family and friends.

He was born Ismael Mena González in 1928 in Santiago, where he attended the Universidad de Chile and received his medical degree in 1954. From 1957 to 1960 he completed postgraduate training in the Department of Radiology/Nuclear Medicine at UCLA Medical Center, with a special interest in the use of radiotracers in endocrinology. He returned to Chile to found the Department of Nuclear Medicine at the Universidad Católica de Santiago, where he served as department chair and a professor of medicine and endocrinology from 1960 to 1973. In 1973 he accepted a position as a professor-in-residence in radiological sciences at the UCLA School of Medicine and as chief of the Division of Nuclear Medicine at Harbor–UCLA. He retired in 1995 with an appointment as an emeritus professor at UCLA, returning to Santiago to continue his work in nuclear medicine at Clínica Las Condes.

Dr. Mena was a research collaborator-in-residence and senior visiting clinician physician at Brookhaven National Laboratory (Upton, NY) for several periods from 1964 to 1973. Over the course of his collaborations with Brookhaven he extended his previous investigations into Parkinson-like motor deficits associated with manganese exposure among Chilean miners. In the 1970s he was among the pioneers of nuclear cardiology, advancing the application of short-lived radioisotopes in this setting. His last 12 years at Harbor were spent collaborating with members



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from the psychiatry and neurology departments on neurologic imaging with SPECT. He was a major contributor to research and understanding of nuclear medicine brain imaging, including the elucidation of important clinical phenomena involving brain function.

Dr. Mena trained countless nuclear medicine physicians, radiologists, and scientists and authored more than 250 scientific papers. He was the recipient of local, national, and international awards, including the George V. Taplin Memorial Lecture-ship award (1982), Norman D. Poe Memorial Award (1983, 1985, 1987, and 1990), and Distinguished Scientist Award (1987), all from the Western Chapter of the Society of Nuclear Medicine. He received the Distinguished Scientist Award in 2002 from the World Federation of Nuclear

Medicine and Biology and, in 2004, an honorary doctorate from the University of Auvergne (France). He was among the founders of the Chilean Society of Nuclear Medicine and served as one of its earliest presidents. In 1998 he was named by the Asociación de Sociedades Latinoamericanas de Biología y Medicina Nuclear (ALASBIMN) as editor-in-chief of *La Revista de ALASBIMN*, which, under his leadership, became the first Latin American scientific journal to be published online.

On a personal note he was my mentor, younger father, older brother, and wiser friend. Dr. Mena is survived by Maria Mena, his wife for 61 years, 4 children, 18 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren.

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