

## Spotlight: Nuno Cardim, MD, PhD, FESC



**“I Want to Make the Echo Lab of Hospital da Luz the Biggest and Best in Portugal, Providing Excellence in Its Clinical Work and Its Scientific Research”**

**Nuno Cardim, director of the Echocardiography Laboratory, Hospital da Luz, Lisbon, Portugal, chair of the Working Group of Echocardiography of the Portuguese Society of Cardiology, and professor of medicine at the Portuguese Red Cross School of Health, talks to Marilou Davis, BScMedTech, RN, MScBIT.**

Nuno Cardim, MD, PhD, FESC, professor of cardiology and director of the Echocardiography Laboratory, Hospital da Luz, Lisbon, Portugal, followed in his grandfather's footsteps when he started his medical studies in 1981 at the University of Lisbon, Faculdade de Medicina de Lisboa. And as a medical student in Lisbon, his birthplace, Cardim was inspired by Maria Emília Silva, MD, a professor of cardiology. He says, “She was a very good teacher. She was not a famous cardiologist, but she strongly influenced my decision to study cardiology.”

Cardim qualified MD in 1987 and began a fellowship in cardiology in 1990 at the Hospital Pulido Valente, Lisbon, where he was encouraged to specialise in echocardiography, and he started to develop his research career with the help of 2 older colleagues and friends, A. Trigo Pereira, MD, and Teresa Ferreira, MD.

### An Inspirational Fellowship in Germany “Made A Difference to My Career”

Two fellowships abroad followed—one in Spain and one in Germany. In 1993, Cardim trained in transthoracic and transoesophageal echocardiography under the guidance of Miguel A. García-Fernández, MD, at the Hospital Gregorio Marañon, Madrid, Spain. Then in 1995, he trained in tissue Doppler imaging with Raimund Erbel, MD, professor and director of the Department of Cardiology at the University Clinic Essen, Essen, Germany.

Professor Cardim says, “The fellowship I did in Germany was very important because at that time tissue Doppler imaging was a new technique in echocardiography. It was a very exciting era. Having a new technique in our hands and having the opportunity to work with it, including working

with Professor Erbel, has made a difference to my career.” Indeed, Professor Cardim considers Professor Erbel to be the person who has inspired him most in his research career and says, “He is a man with great vision. He gave me some important ideas about what I should do in my future career in research. I returned from Germany with the knowledge I had acquired about tissue Doppler imaging, and became the pioneer of this technique in Portugal. I wrote a research paper with Professor Erbel about tissue Doppler imaging in the *Portuguese Journal of Cardiology*,<sup>1</sup> which was the first paper to be published in Portugal about this subject. It was a significant point in my career.”

Professor Cardim's research has focused on hypertrophic cardiomy-

opathy. He says, “In 1996, the genetic study of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy was at an early stage in Portugal. So I collected blood samples from my patients and sent them to Berlin, Germany. It was a cooperative work between us.” This study, together with the knowledge he gained while working with Professor Erbel, led to his doctoral thesis on pulsed tissue Doppler imaging in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.



*Hospital da Luz, Lisbon, Portugal. Professor Cardim says, “I work in a very modern hospital with excellent technology. Hospital da Luz opened just 2 years ago.” Photograph courtesy of Professor Cardim.*



*Professor Cardim with the echocardiography team at Hospital da Luz, Lisbon, Portugal. Photograph courtesy of Professor Cardim.*

### Setting Up the First Outpatient Clinic Specialising in Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy in Portugal

As a result of his interest in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, Professor Cardim is setting up an outpatient clinic specialising in the condition at Hospital da Luz, and describes this as a “dream come true.” It will be the first of its kind in Portugal and will open in September 2009. He says, “In the future, I would like to carry out more investigations and hopefully organise a significant meeting in Portugal that will attract leaders in the field.”

Grants associated with awards such as the Premio Nunes Correa Verdades Faria, a prestigious career award in Portugal given by the Foundation of Santa Casa Misericordia, sometimes fund Professor Cardim’s research, but he says, “I don’t depend on grants because I work in a very modern hospital with excellent technology. Hospital da Luz opened just 2 years ago. It is very exciting to begin a new department and stimulating to organise everything with excellent technical conditions. These things are very important for my research.”

As director of the echocardiography laboratory in Hospital da Luz, Professor Cardim says, “I organise the activity of the echo lab and ensure the quality control of the examinations. Also, I perform advanced echocardiography methods.”

Carrying out both his administrative and clinical responsibilities can be challenging. He explains, “I have to be very organised. There is a specific time for each

work. I want to make the echo lab of Hospital da Luz the biggest and best in Portugal, providing excellence in its clinical work and its scientific research, and will seek European lab accreditation for it.”

Apart from working at Hospital da Luz, Professor Cardim also works as the scientific director of the Portuguese Red Cross School of Health (Escola Superior de Saude da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa) in Lisbon. He says, “I am responsible for the teaching of cardiology in undergraduate areas and also of the graduate activities like masters, teaching courses, and postgraduate courses. I am involved in planning a PhD or masters course in multimodality cardiac imaging. One has to decide which is the best test for each patient.”



Professor Cardim with the jury (including some well-known Portuguese cardiologists) of his PhD, which was on pulsed tissue Doppler imaging in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. Photograph courtesy of Professor Cardim.

### “The First Portuguese Echo Manual Will Be Published Soon”

Professor Cardim has contributed not only to the development of echocardiography in his country, Portugal, but he is also involved with the European Association of Echocardiography (EAE). He comments, “I am proud and happy to be in the group. I consider it a challenge to contact people from new countries in Europe to explain to them the aims of EAE, how the EAE can help them, and how they can help the EAE. Through my position in the EAE—as a councillor in the National Societies and Working Group Committee—I will be able to increase the significance and strength of Portuguese echocardiography in Europe.” He adds, “For a long time Portuguese echocardiography outside the country was centralised on 1 or 2 people, and only they were invited to participate in meetings, chair sessions, and write book chapters abroad.

Over the past 3 years the situation has begun to change. Now we have Portuguese cardiologists who write books. In fact, the first Portuguese echo manual will be published soon. This book is written by 20 Portuguese experts in echocardiography, and I am going to be the editor. We also have Portuguese members in the EAE.”

Talking about his role as chair of the Working Group of Echocardiography of the Portuguese

Society of Cardiology, Professor Cardim says, “my major task is to promote Portugal in the EAE. I wish to fly high, but I also hope my colleagues will fly high with me.”

To the young generation of clinicians who want to follow in his footsteps, Professor Cardim says it is “90% perseverance and hard work, 10% genius. Try to give the best of yourself and be involved in everything you do, from the smallest to the biggest thing, with passion.”

#### Reference

1. Cardim N, Erbel R. Tissue Doppler echocardiography: a new stage in the study of myocardial function. *Rev Port Cardiol.* 1995;14:609–18. In Portuguese.

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