

*Meet
the*

CORREIA FAMILY

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MY OWN PERSONAL TUTOR

BY HORÁCIO CORREIA, MD

Looking back at my son Fernando's childhood (Figure 1A), I remember his unequivocal interest in issues related to health from an early age. Books, videotapes, and TV programs that dealt with myriad health topics captured his attention. When he was 4 or 5 years old, he spent hours watching cartoons about the physiology and anatomy of the human body.

The choice of medicine as a profession seemed to come naturally to Fernando. During his adolescence and even his medical school years, Fernando visited me frequently in my private practice and also accompanied me on hospital emergency visits. He attended sessions in the operating room where I addressed the most diverse surgical ocular pathologies.

Despite our closeness and his natural interest in medicine, I never wanted to influence his choice of profession. I remember a dinner with colleagues at which Fernando was present, shortly before he chose his specialty. When someone asked him what way he was leaning, my colleagues advised him to choose ophthalmology. I admit that Fernando had become a partner at our practice the moment he began medical school; however, I did not intend to interfere with his choice of specialty.

KEEPING UP

With that said, his decision to become an ophthalmologist

made me very glad. At the time, however, I did not realize what a positive influence it would have on my own work. I say this in an ironic way, but with gratitude: I could never relax because Fernando has such curiosity, enthusiasm, and an easy understanding of ocular pathology, and I was obliged to keep up with him, which sometimes has been challenging.

The choice of ophthalmology made by my son has mainly two meanings for me: The first has much to do with affection and the recognition of the importance and beauty of this medical specialty. In this respect, I think his choice was not unconnected with my own professional performance. I tried to show him the different features of our specialty, including the great satisfaction to be gained from the spectacular therapeutic recoveries we can provide for our patients, which, unfortunately, not all specialties can do.

The second has to do with scientific responsibility involved



Figure 1. A young Fernando (A). Fernando at a recent congress (B).

with this choice, which requires us to make every effort to strive for consistent professional improvement. There is constant, rapid scientific evolution in our specialty, and this presents challenges for technological renewal. We must keep up to date with these advances, which requires great economic investment to acquire these technologies and education in how to use them, in order to optimize the treatment of our patients (Figure 1B).

WORKING TOGETHER

Fernando and I have of course learned from each other in the process of practicing together. I believe that I have contributed to his learning, especially by transmitting the teachings and experience of a working life of 35 years dedicated to ophthalmology. I also played a role as principal advisor in his choice of fellowships in the areas of cornea and refractive surgery. My son is also my own personal tutor, and I have the privilege of his daily proximity so that I can benefit from his knowledge. The professional relationship between the two of us has resulted in a qualitative improvement from a scientific point of view in my practice. I also see with satisfaction that our refractive surgery and corneal disease patients have achieved excellent results.

I am proud of the commitment that Fernando puts into every effort in the study and treatment of his patients, never forgetting the human element that can sometimes be overlooked in the treatment of disease. However, perhaps the thing that has most impressed me in his still-short career was his selection as one of the Top 40 Under 40 in 2015 by the magazine *The Ophthalmologist*.

A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

BY FERNANDO FARIA-CORREIA, MD

Even from my early childhood, almost everything related to the human body aroused interest in me. I can still clearly remember the first time that I saw an eye through the slit lamp: It was in my father's clinical practice, as he was examining my grandfather. I felt excited when I was able to see my grandfather's cataracts, and it fueled my curiosity in medicine.

My attraction to medicine also reflected my interest in helping others. Whenever possible, I went with my father to clinical sessions. I always focused on the way that he established connections with his patients in order to be able to understand and help them. In fact, he still gives me advice on this topic.

A DESIRED SPECIALTY

I was aware of the constant technological innovation in ophthalmology, and I considered this an attractive aspect of the specialty. I was also interested in the fact that ophthalmology has several subspecialties, which makes it a wide field with both medical and surgical aspects. However, in Portugal, a physician's specialty choice is based on a ranking of clinicians. The classification



Figure 2. Horácio (left) and Fernando (right) together in the operating room.

obtained in an examination is crucial for making one's preferred choice. Ophthalmology is one of the most desired specialties.

Although my father's career in ophthalmology was always in the forefront of my mind, he had continually made it clear to me that he did not want to influence my decision directly. Several times, however, his colleagues stepped in and tried to convince me to choose ophthalmology. My father's opinion was more influential regarding my choice of subspecialty. Initially, I was focused in surgical retina but also interested in the anterior segment. He helped influence me to choose cornea and refractive surgery, which has turned out to be a good decision. He also advised me to perform my fellowship abroad, in order to broaden my experience and improve my scientific and surgical skills.

It can be challenging to practice in the same field as one's father, but challenges are needed in order for us to continually improve ourselves. My father is demanding in terms of clinical and surgical practice. This encourages me to work hard in order to enhance not only my surgical abilities but also my scientific knowledge. In this way, it seems to me that a symbiosis is created between the two of us.

On the other hand, there are advantages to practicing with someone like my father, whose long experience I can draw on. Experience is a key aspect in medicine, especially in a surgical specialty such as ophthalmology. As I was taking my first steps, it was important to have a person nearby who has already come a long way on this road. The advice of an experienced surgeon is essential to help the new surgeon understand, to avoid or solve complications, and to improve surgical outcomes.

IN CONSTANT CONTACT

Every 2 weeks, my father and I perform a surgical session together, especially cataract and anterior segment surgeries (Figure 2). Our collaboration is essential for both of us to continue improving and overcoming difficulties in our specialties. During the other days of the workweek, we exchange many phone calls and emails to help each other solve problems and answer questions related to diagnosis and therapeutic guidance. ■