In Memoriam: Prof. Joaquín Barraquer

Bradley R. Straatsma, M.D., J.D.
In memoriam, we honor the life and career of Prof. Joaquín Barraquer Moner who died on August 26, 2016. Born on January 26, 1927, Joaquín Barraquer was the grandson of Prof. José Antonio Barraquer Roviralta (1852 – 1924), who was appointed at the University of Barcelona in 1888 as the first Chairman of Ophthalmology in Spain, and the son of Prof. Ignacio Barraquer Barraquer (1884 – 1965), who succeeded his father as Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Barcelona.1-2 Prof. Ignacio Barraquer advanced cataract surgery by inventing the erysiphalke, founded the Barraquer Clinic in 1941 and the Barraquer Institute in 1947. Admirably, he instilled his expertise and commitment to ophthalmology into the core of his sons, José and Joaquín.

José Ignacio Barraquer (1916 – 1998) moved to Bogota, Colombia, founded the Barraquer Institute of America in 1953 and was recognized as a world leader in refractive surgery.

Joaquín Barraquer received extensive tutelage from his father and began helping with cataract surgery at age 13 (Figure 1). He studied Medicine at the University of Barcelona, graduating in 1951; earned the MD Degree at Madrid in 1955; received his second MD Degree at the University of Guayaquil (Ecuador) and his third MD Degree at the University of Bogota (Colombia).

Figure 1. Prof. Ignacio Barraquer (left) with Joaquin Barraquer.
Paralleling his medical degrees, Joaquin Barraquer was, since 1953, Chief-Surgeon and Director of the Barraquer Ophthalmology Centre, Barcelona (Figure 2). For more than a half century, he guided the Barraquer Centre through successive stages of facility enlargement, professional staff expansion and ophthalmology specialization.\(^3\)

![Figure 2. Since 1953, Joaquin Barraquer was Chief Surgeon and Director of the Barraquer Ophthalmology Centre, Barcelona.](image)

As Executive Director and President of the Barraquer Institute, Dr. Barraquer’s research and clinical work focused on corneal transplantation and the surgical management of cataract. In 1955, for example, he presented at the French Congress of Ophthalmology his report on “Keratoplastie Résultats” discussing surgical guidelines and his personal results following 70 cases of keratoplasty in the prior year. In 1962, he and his father, Prof. Ignacio Barraquer, founded the first Eye Bank on the European continent.

For cataract surgery, Joaquin Barraquer was a pioneer in the field of intraocular lens implantation and published, as early as 1953, his personal results with implantation of posterior chamber intraocular lens for correction of aphakia and high myopia. In 1957, Joaquin Barraquer
discovered the lytic action of alpha chymotrypsin on the zonule and developed “Enzymatic Zonulolysis” to facilitate intracapsular extraction of the cataract. Between 1958 and 1961, more than 600 reports on Enzymatic Zonulolysis were published in the world literature.⁴

Appointed Professor and Chairman of Ocular Surgery at the Autonomous University of Barcelona in 1970 and Director of the Barraquer University Institute, affiliated with Autonomous University of Barcelona in 1993, Joaquín Barraquer used these university positions to strengthen his career-long commitment to ophthalmic education through training programs and courses for ophthalmologists and related professionals (Figure 3).

![Figure 3](image.jpg)

Figure 3. In 1993, Prof. Joaquin Barraquer became Director of the Barraquer University Institute, affiliated with the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

In 2003, he added responsibilities as Founder and President of the Barraquer Foundation. Currently managed by his daughter, Dr. Elena Barraquer, the Foundation supports programs of social responsibility to improve eye health in underserved populations of Africa and Latin America.³ ⁵
Stemming from his research, patient care and surgery, Joaquín Barraquer published 14 books, authored more than 375 scientific reports and produced over 200 surgical teaching films and videos. Throughout his career, he presented numerous distinguished lectures, including the Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis Lecture, and participated actively in greater than 450 congresses and scientific meetings worldwide.

For his accomplishments, Prof. Barraquer was recognized as Doctor Honoris Causa and Honorary Professor at 11 universities and received more than 50 decorations, awards and ophthalmic distinctions. Among the latter are the Gold Jose Rizal Medal, highest award of the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology, and induction in 2003 into the “Ophthalmology Hall of Fame” by the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery.

As his greatest accomplishment, Joaquín Barraquer transferred his passion for service to patients and excellence in ophthalmology to his daughter, Dr. Elena Barraquer Compte, and his son, Dr. Rafael Ignacio Barraquer Compte (Figure 4). At the Barraquer Center, Dr. Elena Barraquer specializes in pediatric ophthalmology. With a passion for the eye and vision care of children, Dr. Elena Barraquer now serves as President of the Barraquer Foundation and leads social responsibility programs of eye care and surgery in developing nations.

Figure 4. Prof. Joaquin Barraquer (center) with Dr. Rafael Barraquer and Dr. Elena Barraquer.
Dr. Rafael Barraquer is now Director of the Barraquer Center and holds the Research Chair in Ophthalmology Joaquín Barraquer at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. He directs research on cataract and intraocular lens development, holds Chair XXV in the Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis and is President of the 2018 World Ophthalmology Congress in Barcelona.

Prof. Joaquin Barraquer is survived by his lovely wife, Mariana Andrade Compte Barraquer, his children, grandchildren and other family members.

References

2. Curriculum Vitae, Prof. Joaquin Barraquer, Addendum; 2001-2006