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ONE LIFE IN MEDICINE

Eduardo Barroso

A leading surgeon and civic personality

By
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Professor Eduardo Barroso was born in Lisbon in January 1949, the son of a physician and a chemical engineer.

He states that his calling to medicine emerged naturally, though the influence of his father, a general practitioner, was undeniably significant.

From his mother – an athlete and national champion in the balance beam for Sporting Clube de Portugal – he inherited a devotion to the club, becoming a member shortly after his birth.

Regarding his professional path, he remarked that he "never wanted to be a doctor" – then, pausing with a smile, added, "I always wanted to be a surgeon!"

He recalled that, as a child, he enjoyed "operating" on his sister's dolls; despite her protests, she, being younger, could do little to curb her brother's surgical impulses.

After completing his secondary education at his family's school, Colégio Moderno, he enrolled at the University of Lisbon's Faculty of Medicine (at Hospital de Santa Maria), the only such institution in Lisbon at the time.

> *I always wanted to be a surgeon!*

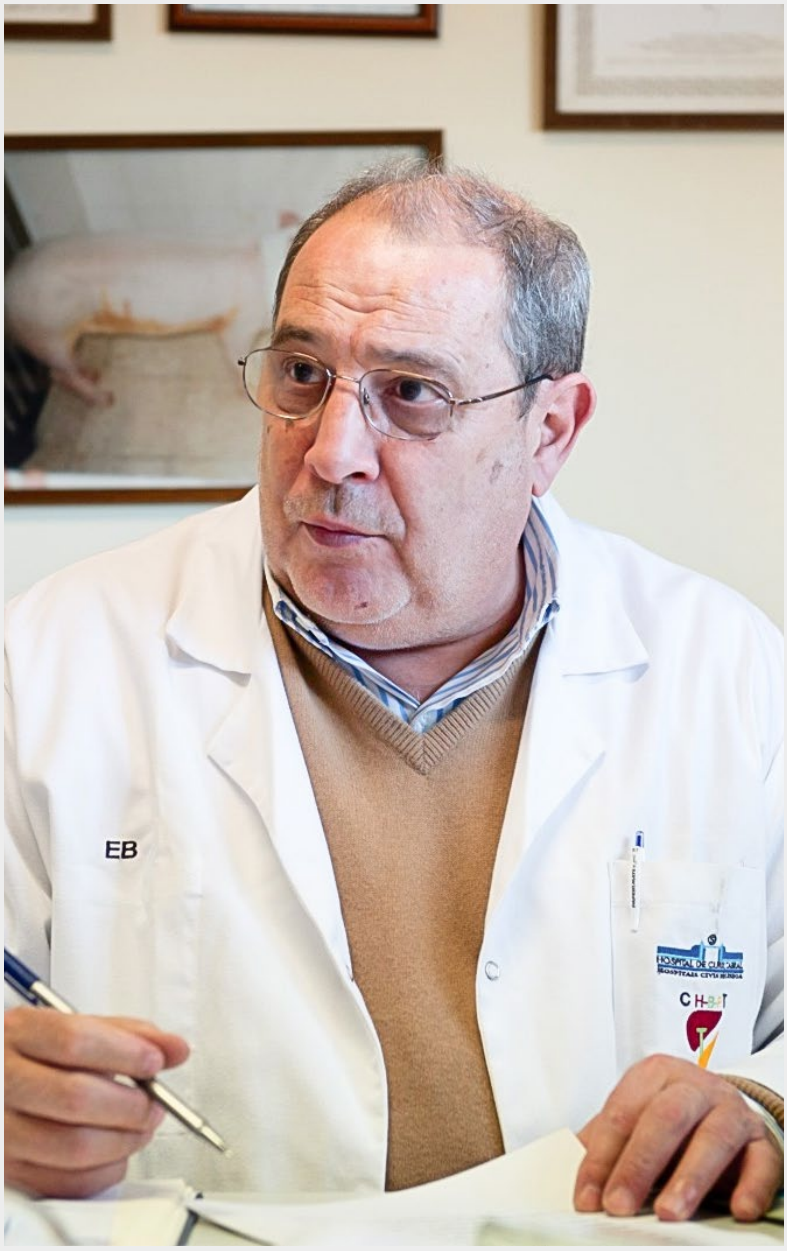

FIGURE 1. Professor Eduardo Barroso at Hospital Curry Cabral, Lisbon, where he established and led the Hepato-Bilio-Pancreatic and Transplantation Center (CHBPT).
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Having graduated in 1972, he was consistently a strong student and chose to complete his internship at Hospitais Civis de Lisboa (HCL). He speaks with pride of his time in the emergency department at Hospital de São José, known locally as the "Banco," a prestigious centenary institution that he considers a true school of surgery to which he returned several times throughout his career.

After completing his surgical internship at the HCL, he developed an interest in liver surgery. Looking ahead, he foresaw transplantation as the future of the field, reasoning that any surgical unit dedicated to the liver would necessarily have to include transplantation, a procedure not yet available in Portugal at the time.

His close association with another surgeon at the HCL, Dr. João Rodrigues Pena – a pioneer of kidney transplantation in Portugal – inspired him and would prove to be a source of lifelong support in this burgeoning field, which had begun to expand following the advent of effective immunosuppression.

His professional skills in this field were strengthened by a stay (1983–85) at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, under the guidance of Sir Roy Calne – a world pioneer in liver and kidney transplantation. This opportunity was made possible through the support of Dr. João Rodrigues Pena, who had himself practiced there for 15 years.

In Portugal, the first kidney transplant was the result of a partnership between Professor Linhares Furtado, from the Hospitais da Universidade de Coimbra and Dr. Rodrigues Pena at the Hospital da Cruz Vermelha in Lisbon.

When the kidneys from a deceased donor became available in Coimbra, Prof. Linhares Furtado provided one of them to Dr. Rodrigues Pena while transplanting the other himself; thus, the first kidney transplants in Portugal were performed simultaneously in Coimbra and Lisbon, using organs from the same donor.

In September 1992, Dr. Rodrigues Pena and Prof. Eduardo Barroso performed the first liver transplant in Lisbon at the Hospital Curry Cabral. The recipient was a woman suffering from familial amyloid polyneuropathy (Portuguese type) – an autosomal dominant disease caused by a mutation in the transthyretin protein, which is produced primarily in the liver of affected individuals. Liver transplantation serves as a vital therapeutic option, significantly improving both the quality of life and the survival of those affected.

At that same hospital, Prof. Eduardo Barroso went on to establish and lead the Hepato-Bilio-Pancreatic and Transplantation Center (CHBPT) until his retirement. This unit, which now bears his name, reached the remarkable milestone of 2,500 liver transplants by July 2022 and currently maintains an average of 100 to 140 transplants per year.

As a highly skilled surgeon deeply dedicated to liver transplantation and other hepatobiliary conditions, Professor Eduardo Barroso recalls that, shortly after retiring, he stopped performing surgeries – concluding that his younger colleagues, whom he had trained, were already operating better than he was.

As he said, his greatest joy lies in having established a "school" – a legacy of skilled professionals continuing his work.

The CHBPT at the Hospital Curry Cabral in Lisbon remains an internationally recognized center of excellence in its field.

Professor Eduardo Barroso has led a life dedicated not only to surgery but also to teaching, serving as a professor at the Faculty of Medical Sciences in Lisbon (NOVA Medical School). He has held several other roles within the medical field – such as president of the Portuguese Authority for Blood and Transplantation – while also engaging in civic life, including a leadership role at Sporting Clube de Portugal, alongside some involvement in politics.

"His greatest joy lies in having established a "school"– a legacy of skilled professionals continuing his work".

FIGURE 2. Tribute to Professor Catarina Resende de Oliveira by the Portuguese Society of Neurology, 2024. *(Foto: © Esfera das Ideias.)*

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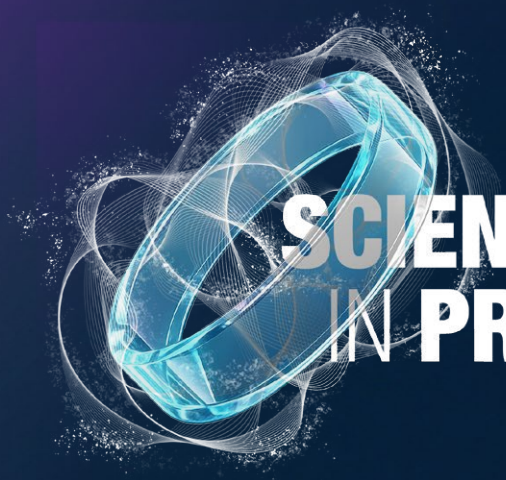

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