

# Eurípides Ferreira: a pioneer of hematology and hematopoietic cell transplantation in Brazil

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of hematology and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation in Brazil is inseparable from the life and work of Professor Eurípides Ferreira, who passed away on April 3, 2026, at the age of 86 (Fig. 1).



Source: Authors' collection.

**Figure 1.** Eurípides Ferreira.

His death marks the loss of one of the true pioneers of Brazilian hematology, but his legacy extends far beyond the pioneering procedures with which his name is historically associated. Eurípides was a physician, scientist, teacher, mentor, and, above all, a builder of institutions and people. His professional journey spanned more than five decades and encompassed hematology, immunology, histocompatibility, laboratory medicine, clinical oncology, and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation.

## FROM HISTOCOMPATIBILITY TO TRANSPLANTATION

Born in 1940, Eurípides graduated in Medicine at the Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) and early in his career recognized the transformative potential of immunology and histocompatibility.

Between 1969 and 1970, he traveled to Italy for postgraduate training in hematology and worked at the Institute of Medical Genetics in Turin. There, he was introduced to the identification of histocompatibility antigens—knowledge that would become fundamental to donor selection and hematopoietic transplantation.

He subsequently pursued further training in the United States of America, deepening his expertise in this emerging field. At a time when human leukocyte antigen (HLA) typing and transplantation were still developing internationally, Eurípides understood their potential for Brazilian patients and returned home determined to bring this knowledge into clinical practice. His vision culminated in one of the defining moments in the history of Brazilian medicine.

On October 15, 1979, at the Hospital de Clínicas of UFPR, Eurípides Ferreira and Ricardo Pasquini, together with a multidisciplinary team, performed the first bone marrow transplant in Brazil and in Latin America. The procedure was performed in a patient with severe aplastic anemia using an HLA-compatible sibling donor<sup>1</sup>. This was much more than a pioneering medical procedure. It represented the beginning of a new therapeutic era in Brazil.

At that time, transplantation required the simultaneous development of donor selection, histocompatibility testing, transfusion support, infection control, conditioning, immunosuppression, and specialized clinical care. Eurípides understood that transplantation could only succeed through the integration of all these disciplines<sup>2</sup>.

## A CAREER BEYOND THE FIRST TRANSPLANT

Although history remembers him as one of the pioneers of bone marrow transplantation, reducing Eurípides Ferreira's career to that achievement would not do justice to his contribution.

He became Professor of Hematology and Clinical Oncology at UFPR and Associate Professor of Immunology at the Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Escola Paulista de Medicina. He also served as a hematologist at the Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein in São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil, where he contributed to clinical care, laboratory medicine, research, and the development of transplantation activities.

His work at Einstein is particularly meaningful to those of us who had the privilege of sharing that journey with him. Eurípides was involved with the Clinical Laboratory/Department of Clinical Pathology at Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein, participating in scientific work that reflected his longstanding interest in laboratory medicine, coagulation, immunology, and hematology.

His presence at Einstein also extended into the emerging field of transplantation. He was a member of the Brazilian Cooperative Study Group on Bone Marrow Transplantation in Acute Myeloid Leukemia, representing the Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein alongside a group of hematologists and transplant physicians who were helping to establish the scientific foundations of transplantation in Brazil.

For many of us at Einstein, his presence was not simply that of a distinguished physician with an extraordinary *résumé*. He represented a direct connection with the origins of transplantation in Brazil.

The pioneer of the first Brazilian transplant was now sitting beside a new generation of hematologists, participating in clinical studies, discussing patients, reviewing laboratory results, and contributing to the development of a transplant program that was itself entering a new era.

That continuity between generations was one of the most remarkable aspects of Eurípides' career.

## BUILDING INSTITUTIONS AND EDUCATING GENERATIONS

Eurípides Ferreira's contribution extended well beyond academic titles and scientific publications.

At the Hospital Pequeno Príncipe in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil, he played a decisive role in establishing and developing the oncology, hematology, and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation services, helping transform the institution into a major national reference center for pediatric cancer and transplantation.

He was deeply committed to teaching and mentorship. His career included approximately 60 publications in indexed journals, hundreds of scientific presentations and communications at national and international meetings, and numerous book chapters in hematology and immunology. But numbers alone cannot adequately describe his academic legacy.

His greatest contribution may have been the people he influenced. He trained physicians, encouraged young hematologists, participated in multidisciplinary teams, and transmitted not only scientific knowledge but also a philosophy of medical practice based on humility, dedication, and humanity.

One of the statements most closely associated with him was: “No one does anything alone.” It was not simply a phrase. It was a principle that reflected the way he practiced medicine.

Transplantation, perhaps more than any other area of medicine, demonstrates the truth of those words. A successful transplant depends on the patient, family, donor, physicians, nurses, laboratory professionals, blood bank, pharmacists, infectious disease specialists, nutritionists, psychologists, and countless other professionals working together. Eurípides understood this long before multidisciplinary care became the language of modern medicine.

## THE PHYSICIAN AND THE HUMAN BEING

Beyond his professional achievements, Eurípides was remembered for the extraordinary humanity with which he cared for his patients. Former patients and their families have described his patience, warmth, and ability to inspire hope during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Eurípides believed that technical excellence and human compassion were not competing values. They were inseparable. This philosophy was particularly evident in his work with children and their families at the Hospital Pequeno Príncipe. He repeatedly emphasized that every member of the healthcare team—from physicians to support staff—was essential to patient care.

His career therefore offers an important lesson to future generations: scientific excellence has its greatest meaning when placed at the service of another human being.

## A LIFE BEYOND MEDICINE

Behind the pioneering physician, Eurípides was also a husband, father, and grandfather. He was married to Maria Marta de Souza Ferreira and is survived by three children and six grandchildren. His family was an essential part of the man behind the physician—the source of affection, strength, and continuity throughout a life devoted so intensely to medicine.

For those who knew Eurípides professionally, it is important to remember that the physician who helped transform Brazilian transplantation also had a private life, relationships, friendships, and a family who shared the joys and sacrifices of more than five decades of medical dedication.

## A LEGACY THAT LIVES ON

It is tempting to define a pioneer by the event that first placed Eurípides Ferreira’s name in history. For him, that event was October 15, 1979, but his true legacy is much larger. He helped introduce and develop the concepts of histocompatibility that made transplantation possible in Brazil. He participated in the first bone marrow transplant in the country and in Latin America. He contributed to the development of transplantation involving unrelated donors. He worked in hematology, immunology, laboratory medicine, clinical oncology, and transplantation. He helped build services and institutions. He participated in scientific studies. He educated generations of physicians. And, throughout his career, he remained committed to the patient.

Nowadays, Brazilian hematopoietic cell transplantation is a mature and internationally recognized field, with sophisticated donor registries, advanced HLA typing, cellular therapies, unrelated and haploidentical transplantation, and increasingly complex clinical programs. It is easy to forget how distant that reality once seemed.

Eurípides Ferreira belonged to the generation that made it possible. For those of us who had the privilege of working with him, particularly during his years at the Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein, his presence was also a living link to the origins of our specialty. His experience, his stories, his scientific curiosity, and his perspective reminded us that every advanced program has a history—and that every history begins with people willing to take the first step. His death leaves an immense void, but it also leaves a legacy that cannot be diminished by time.

Eurípides Ferreira did not simply perform the first bone marrow transplant in Brazil. He helped create the path on which generations of Brazilian hematologists and transplant physicians would walk.

His scientific contributions will remain in the literature. His institutional contributions will remain in the services he helped build. His teachings will remain in the physicians he trained.

However, perhaps his most enduring legacy will remain in the lives of the patients he cared for and in the generations of physicians who learned from him that medicine requires not only knowledge and courage, but also humility, compassion, and teamwork.

As we say goodbye to Professor Eurípides Ferreira, we honor not only a pioneer of Brazilian transplantation, but a physician whose life demonstrated that science can change medicine, but humanity is what gives medicine its meaning.

May his memory continue to inspire all of us who have inherited the path he helped open.

Eurípides Ferreira (1940–2026) — physician, hematologist, immunologist, pioneer, teacher, mentor, and one of the founders of hematopoietic stem cell transplantation in Brazil.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nothing to declare.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data are presented in the article.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

**Manuscript preparation:** Hamerschlak N and Odone Filho V; **Manuscript writing:** Hamerschlak N and Odone Filho V; **Critical revision:** Hamerschlak N and Odone Filho V; **Final approval:** Hamerschlak N.

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