

Detailed account of the cure

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Summary: From the beginning of his professional practice as an orthopedic surgeon in 1956, Doctor Nevado used X-rays very frequently. At that time the equipment used did not provide sufficient protection against radiation; during extended

sessions it was used at full power. In 1962, the first signs of disease began to show on his hands. They became hairless, and there appeared a reddening and some dark spots on the skin. From then on, Dr. Nevado took greater precautions, but the disease continued to progress. The spots increased and the skin became thicker and scaly, there also appeared warty lesions and ulcers on the sides of the fingers. From 1982 onwards, apart from the pain caused by anything rubbing against his hands, they became less flexible. This discomfort and awkwardness became so great that he had to abandon major surgery in 1984. As the lesions progressed, he consulted some of his colleagues. He was diagnosed as having chronic radiodermatitis and that there was no curative treatment. The doctors only suggested that, for the time being and as a palliative measure, he should use vaseline to smooth the

wounds. They also added that perhaps a skin graft could stop or slow down the evolution of the disease. Dr. Nevada only did the first, leaving the graft for later. In 1992, when the radiodermatitis had become irreversible and a carcinoma had appeared on his left hand, someone gave him a prayer-card of Blessed Josemaría and encouraged him to pray to him for his cure. In just two weeks his lesions were completely cured, he recovered the normal use of his hands, and was able to go back to doing surgery.

Dr. Manuel Nevado

Manuel Nevado was born in Herrera de Alcántara (Cáceres), Spain, on 21 May 1932. He qualified as a medical doctor at the University of Salamanca in 1955. He was admitted as an intern to the Surgical Department of the Marqués de Valdecilla Hospital in Santander,

specializing in General Surgery and Orthopedic Surgery.

Exposure to radiation

From the beginning of his work as an intern he very often used radioscopy for setting bone fractures. At that time, radioscopy units were not sufficiently protected against radiation. They used what was called a "Siemens X-ray tube." The surgeon would position the broken limb between the X-ray tube and the radioscopic screen, using his hands to align and join together the broken parts of the bone. The definition on the screen was very poor, so that surgeons had to use maximum power, for a fairly long time. The left hand was usually the one most exposed to radiation, as it was used to hold the broken limb in front of the X-ray tube.

Towards the end of 1956, Dr. Nevado went to Badajoz to do his military

service and was assigned to work at the Military Hospital, where he was in charge of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery. There he continued to use radioscopy to set fractures, extract foreign bodies, and perform various other procedures.

At the end of his military service, Dr. Nevado joined the Social Security Hospital at Badajoz, where he remained until 1962. There he continued using X-ray equipment extensively for direct radioscopy.

1962: First symptoms of the disease

In December 1962 he married Consuelo Santos, an arts graduate who was a qualified theater nurse. They had met a few years earlier at the Marqués de Valdecillas Hospital. Mrs Nevado has testified to the repeated exposure to X-rays which her husband's hands had suffered, through lack of proper protection. She recalls how, even at the time of

their marriage, there had appeared the first symptoms of what, in time, would become serious chronic radiodermatitis – a skin disease caused by radiation. The back of his fingers had already become hairless and the skin on his hands had red patches and black spots.

Dr. Isidro Parra, a Professor of Dermatology who first met Dr. Nevado in 1963, clearly remembers that his hands already showed typical signs of prolonged exposure to X-rays.

After the wedding, Dr. Nevado settled in Almendralejo, Badajoz. From 1962 to 1980 he was Medical Administrator and Head of the Department of General Surgery and Orthopedic Surgery at the Nuestra Señora del Pilar Hospital of Almendralejo, run by the Sisters of Charity of our Lady of Mercy. He took more precautions and, as soon as he

could, stopped using the Siemens X-ray tube for setting fractures, opting for equipment that offered better protection. However, the condition of the skin on the back of his hands and fingers continued to worsen. The reddened areas developed into hyperkeratotic plaques, which are abnormally thickened patches of skin, and into small scattered wart-like growths, particularly on the back of his left hand and on the sides of his fingers, together with sores of varying sizes.

In 1980 he left the Nuestra Señora del Pilar Hospital of Almendralejo and from then on, apart from private practice, worked at the Social Security Medical Care Center in Zafra, Badajoz.

Progressive manual disability

From 1982 onwards, he suffered sharp pain and acute discomfort in his hands when they brushed against

anything. At the same time, he noticed a loss of sensation and mobility in his hands, due to the pain produced when brushing against something or bending his fingers.

The theater nurse who normally assisted him, Sister Carmen Esqueta, noticed the difficulty Dr. Nevado had with some of the surgical instruments, which hurt him when he used them. She also remembers that he could not scrub his hands thoroughly with detergents, as all surgeons do before performing operations, because it was too painful. Surgeons also put talcum powder on the inside of their gloves. Dr. Nevado, at this stage, could not tolerate the talcum powder either, for it irritated his sores. He would use sterilized linen gloves under the rubber ones to avoid using talcum powder.

The problem became so acute that from 1984 or 1985 onwards he had to cease performing any serious surgery, and only did minor operations that did not involve the meticulous cleansing required in an operating theater.

Unanimous diagnosis of chronic radiodermatitis

As the condition of his hands worsened, Dr. Nevado began to worry about what would happen to them. From time to time he mentioned to his wife that he might have to have skin grafts on his hands and fingers. He informally consulted friends of his who were specialists in dermatology about the state of his hands. Their unanimous diagnosis was that he had chronic radiodermatitis and that no treatment would cure it. There were only palliative measures such as lubricating the skin with Vaseline, or

the possibility of covering the lesions with a skin graft.

In 1992, some professors of dermatology observed that the skin on his hands was ulcerated. The main thing they noticed was a long, wide ulcer with encrusted edges, two centimeters wide at the most, on the back and inner side of the middle finger on his left hand. There were also other smaller ulcers and patches of extra thick, scab-like skin. In other places the skin was scaly and very red.

All the specialists who were consulted agreed that it was a case of squamous cell carcinoma. They all knew the history of Dr. Nevado's disease, and were in no doubt about the diagnosis. It was an inevitable consequence of the chronic radiodermatitis which had progressed over many years. Having followed its course, the disease had

arrived at its gravest stage, which was irreversible. Given the nature of the case, several specialists, who made a careful study of the diagnosis according to different possibilities, were perfectly sure that this judgement was correct.

In the next phase of the pathological process it was to be expected that the cancer would spread via the lymphatic system to body organs, with a clear risk to life. In such cases, the only remedy is the amputation of the affected hand, or even the arm in dire cases, and also to remove the lymph nodes.

Recourse to Blessed Josemaria's intercession

In the first week of November 1992, Dr. Nevado had to make some enquiries at a Ministry in Madrid. The member of staff who spoke to him noticed the condition of his hands and asked him what had

caused it. Dr. Nevado told him that it was due to an occupational disease which was progressive, and that there was no remedy. The man then told him to ask for God's help, and gave him a prayer-card of Blessed Josemaria Escriva, suggesting he should pray to God for his cure through Blessed Josemaria's intercession.

As soon as he received the prayer-card, Dr. Nevado began to pray that his hands would heal. A few days later, on 12 November 1992, he travelled to Vienna for professional reasons, and was impressed to find prayer-cards of Blessed Josemaria in a number of churches he visited. This helped him to have more confidence in his intercession, and he invoked his help more persistently.

A cure with no scientific explanation

A few days after he started to pray for his hands to be healed, he noted the first signs of improvement. In a fortnight, all the damage caused by the disease had completely disappeared. There was no scientific explanation for this, since it was a disease that had commenced thirty years before and had, until then, grown continuously worse.

His wife also noticed the surprisingly rapid recovery of his hands: she could see that the ulcers were healing and the patches of extra thick skin were disappearing. Dr. Nevado no longer asked her to change the dressings on his hands.

The acute discomfort, the pain he had felt at the slightest knock and the loss of sensitivity in his hands, had all disappeared spontaneously, and he regained normal use of his hands. From January 1993 onwards he was able to carry out all kinds of

operations again as normal. Up to the present time the cure has remained stable, as is clear from the appearance of his hands.

Conclusion

Dr. Nevado himself, and the other witnesses who had seen the condition of his hands, including specialists in dermatology and radiotherapy, stated that he had serious chronic radiodermatitis on the back of his hands and fingers. The disease had progressed over thirty years, given that the first symptoms were observed in 1962. As the years went by, his ailment obliged him to restrict his work as a surgeon and finally limit himself to medical consultation.

It has been proved beyond doubt that the serious damage to the skin was linked with frequent, prolonged exposure to ionizing radiation.

Occupational chronic radiodermatitis is a well-known complaint, which affects orthopedic surgeons and radio-therapeutic doctors who started to practice when X-ray equipment did not provide the protection of modern equipment. This chronic condition evolves slowly and progressively, never improves or disappears spontaneously, and has no cure. At its most advanced stage, when carcinomas have appeared, the only effective remedy is amputation of the parts affected by the tumors, in order to avoid the cancer spreading to vital organs. (metastasis)

It is therefore not just surprising but medically inexplicable that, after Dr. Nevado had suffered from progressive chronic radiodermatitis for more than thirty years, his hands should have healed spontaneously towards the end of November 1992, which was when he sought the

intercession of Blessed Josemaria Escriva.

Dr. Nevado himself said, "I have put down here exactly how my radiodermatitis was cured. I was very much afraid that a metastasis might develop, which would have left me with no possible hope of recovery. But that did not happen. Quite simply, the radiodermatitis has been cured, and I can only attribute it to the intercession of Blessed Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer."

Having seen the testimonies of the witnesses and the supporting documents, the Medical Committee of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints unanimously established the following diagnosis: "a grave cancerous state of chronic radiodermatitis in its third and irreversible stage."

It also classified the outcome of such a condition as "infaust" (with no

hope of cure) in view of the degree of gravity the illness had reached.

The complete cure of the disease occurred in just under a fortnight and it was confirmed by examinations of the patient made in 1992, 1994 and 1997. The Medical Committee declared that it was "very rapid, complete, and lasting." Bearing in mind that there is no possible biological explanation and that, to date, there has never been any report in medical literature of any case of a spontaneous cure of cancerous chronic radiodermatitis, the Medical Committee concluded that the case of Dr. Manuel Nevado was "scientifically inexplicable."

At present, Dr. Nevado lives in Almendralejo, Badajoz, and works as a surgeon at the Social Security Medical Care Center in Zafra.

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