

## A Tribute to the Memory of Dr. Leo Pessini (1955 – 2019)

On July 24, 2019, the death of Dr. Leo Pessini was announced, in São Paulo, Brazil. The apparitions always scarcer in the media were interpreted by many as a natural consequence of the role that he took on as a Superior General of the Camillians in Rome in 2014. For this reason, the announcement of his death came as a surprise, particularly to those who knew him for his work in the world of health care and bioethics.

Dr. Leo Pessini has left a great legacy for bioethical reflection. He held a doctorate in Moral Theology, with an emphasis on bioethics. He defended the thesis entitled “Dysthanasia: until when to prolong life?” which is definitely a basic reference of issues related to the borders of life. His focus on this theme, however, began in 1982 when he became a chaplain at Hospital das Clinicas de São Paulo, where he worked for 13 years. There he faced a wide range of challenges. In his numerous articles and books, he defended excellence in care and humanization, particularly at the end of one’s life. Also, participation in various scientific bodies of health and bioethics expanded his field of action both nationally and internationally.

In the last conversation I had with Dr. Leo Pessini (18/04/2017), when he was working in Rome, he expressed a desire to learn about the realities in the field of public health in various countries. He was a man with an integral vision of the human being. He believed that the humanized care of the patient blended naturally with the spiritual care at the borders of life. His commitment and invaluable contribution to the humanized practice in the final stage of life were essential in the process of creating guidelines for the safe practice of Orthothanasia in medicine in Brazil. According to him, life in all stages must be lived with a full meaning. Although the initial and main focus of his contributions was the end of life, the other phases were not less relevant. Therefore, the Brazilians in particular owe him a lot for his valuable contribution to the quality of public health. In this case, several fields are to be considered: universal access to health care, full health care, health determinants, i.e., the impact of the socioeconomic context on the health of the population.

Dr. Leo Pessini embraced, with diligence, the cause of Fritz Jahr. Some of his articles mention this author. In 2011, he opened a vast space in the magazine *Revista Bioethikos*, under his responsibility, to publish a series of articles written by Jahr that had been discovered by then, with the post-script by Dr. Hans-Martin Sass entitled: "Essays in Bioethics and Ethics 1927-1947".<sup>1</sup> This was a significant milestone for the spread of Jahr's bioethics. It was not the first time that someone published articles on the discovery of Jahr, because at that point, among other things, the article by Dr. José Goldim<sup>2</sup> (2006), on the beginning of bioethics in 1926/1927, was already known. However, Dr. Leo Pessini has contributed to a broader expansion of the beginning of Jahr's bioethics.

I would also like to express my personal gratitude for the support of Dr. Leo Pessini, particularly in defense of my doctoral thesis, which had as its focus the relevance of the bioethical thinking of Fritz Jahr.

Dr. Leo Pessini has left an important legacy for bioethics in the academic sphere and society as a whole. His constant presence at academic events and the popularity are a demonstration of his scientific knowledge that he made known to all spheres of society, thus contributing to an ample debate on issues of bioethics.

To Dr. Leo Pessini, our gratitude and eternal remembrance!

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1 *Revista Bioethikos* (magazine). *Essays in Bioethics and Ethics 1927- 1947*. São Paulo: - Centro Universitário São Camilo - 2011;5(3): 242-275.

2 Goldim, José. *Bioethics: Origins and Complexity*. Available on: <https://www.ufrgs.br/bioetica/complex.pdf>. Visited on: 30 Oct 2019.