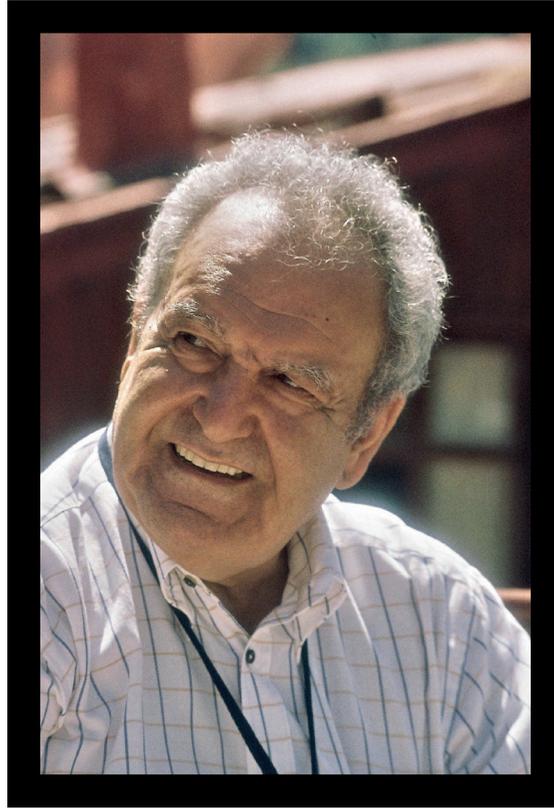




## IN MEMORIAM



**Prof. Agop Kotoğyan**

Professor Agop Kotoğyan was born in İstanbul in 1939. He had his primary school education in Samatya Sahakyan Primary School. He graduated from Kumkapı Bezciyan Secondary School in 1953 and from Galata Getronagan High School in 1957. He received education in İstanbul Faculty of Medicine between 1957 and 1963. He was assigned as a resident doctor to Cerrahpaşa Skin Diseases and Syphilis Clinic in 1964. His specialization thesis was "Clinical and Biochemical Research on Impetigo Herpetiformis". He passed his specialization examination with success in 1967. While he was continuing to serve as a head resident at Cerrahpaşa Medical School Skin Diseases and Syphilis Department, he was sent by the university to Germany to work with Prof. Nödl from the Dermatology Clinic of Hamburg (Saar) University in October 1969 to improve his knowledge and experience. After returning to his clinic in 1972, he completed his studies for associate professorship and he passed the university associate professorship examination in 1973. The subject of his

associate professorship thesis was "Chromosome Studies in Patients with Ichtyosis Vulgaris".

He got married with Suzan Kotoğyan in 1975. They had two children, a boy and a girl. He became a full professor in 1979 with his thesis on "Immunological Research in Patients with Acne Vulgaris". He published more than two hundred scientific papers in the country and abroad. He attended innumerable domestic and international congresses with or without a report. Being a member in many professional associations, Agop Hodja continued serving with success as the Chairman of the Association of Dermatological and Venereal Diseases (1979-1985 and 1987-1995). After retiring from Cerrahpaşa Medical School Dermatology Department in 2004, Professor Agop Kotoğyan continued serving as a private clinic physician until he died on February 13, 2018.

**Turkderm-Turkish Archives of Dermatology and  
Venereology**

## Agop Hodja in the words of and as photographed by Prof. Ertuğrul H. Aydemir

Agop Hodja, Prof. Agop Kotoğyan or "Armless Agop", his nickname which I dislike, lived as a myth in the circles of dermatology and before the Turkish nation and the time came when he said farewell and reached eternity. Very well-known with his name, the patients he healed and the difficulty of having an appointment with him, I worked with my teacher for more than 30 years in good times and bad times.

I first met Agop Hodja when I stepped into Cerrahpaşa Medical School because I couldn't find a position in the Dermatology Clinic of İstanbul University Medical School (Çapa), from which I had graduated (We shared the same fate with Agop Hodja as he also came to Cerrahpaşa as there was no position for him in Çapa). When I started working at the clinic in May 1974, the symbol, top figure of the clinic in my eyes was Agop Hodja who was the junior of the two associate professors working with now deceased Prof. Faruk Nemlioğlu (the senior one was now deceased Hafit Savaşkan Hodja) and he was the one closest to us, the assistants. Our communication was almost always with Agop Hodja, he was the one on duty to hear our problems or to reflect the scolding due to us in a milder way. He used to stand by the door at the clinic, make quick diagnoses for the coming patients and send them to us saying "Here is a Leprosy" (even those with leprosy would come to the outpatient clinic in those days) or "Here is a psoriasis", etc. My teacher who just newly became an associate professor had his fame spreading even before he opened his own private clinic. When we went to the opening of his private clinic, he asked us "Was it easy to find here?". The answer from our stutterer friend Cihanbaş who was the most senior among us and 1.90 meters tall was "Of-of of course, I asked in Ta-Ta Taksim (the clinic was in Şişli!) where Agop's place was, they sh-sh showed right away!".

It was very important for me that he tolerated with a smile on his face my jokes and tactless acts (I used to do them frequently) (it was important because otherwise I might have found myself outside the gate). During my assistantship, one morning I thought I came too early to the clinic and staying at the door to the assistants room I said "Zoo!" to friends as a morning joy "Hagop's place is here, no?", then I heard the hodja's voice from behind "It's here, it's here". I used to tease him in two things: First was that I used to say every time I saw that he had bought a lottery ticket "Aha, there is no point for us to buy one anymore". He would naturally ask "Why, my son?", my answer was ready "Money attracts money my hodja, we cannot win anymore" and he would say smiling "You have your eyes on my money". The second was that I used to say now and then "When I become a specialist, I will open a private clinic right opposite to your clinic; it would be enough for me if those who couldn't have an appointment with you come to me". He would always laugh, but he always supported me in opening a private clinic; he would say "A doctor should have a private clinic". Fortunately, I had a clinic a bit further down on the opposite side of the same street if not right opposite to his. But his patients would not come to me, my patients would sometimes go to him for verification and my hodja would kindly direct them back to me. One of the characteristics of Agop Hodja that surprised me most was that although he was the best

earning professor of the clinic and the owner of the only Mercedes (to me it was a sign of wealth) in the vicinity, when collecting money for a person or charity, the amounts he gave were disappointingly low. Later I found out that he was trying, with great care, not to exceed the amounts our most senior Faruk Hodja gave; he thought that would be disrespect to him and harm his prestige.

Years later, I think when Yalçın (Tüzün) and I were both associate professors, we persuaded hodja to take us to dinner in Ankara in the evening of a Lütfü Tat Symposium. After we were a little in high spirits at dinner, we started picking on hodja "Hodja, what is the secret to this fame?". In his usual humbleness, "My son" he said "when your name is Agop and you miss an arm, you are easily remembered". However, we knew very well that until that time, there were almost no doctors who communicated with patients; it was a period of arrogant, semi-god type doctors. Hodja captured such communication maybe consciously as a strategy, maybe purely through his own spontaneity and instincts. He destroyed barriers with his calling patients "my mother, my sister, my lad" and putting his arm around their shoulders. His knowledge and skill in dermatology was known to everyone, but the communication he had with patients was equally important. It was a period when his myth reached a peak when the saying "I went to Agop too, but had no recovery" among people meant that disease would never heal.

Hodja used to tell us his pleasant reminiscences from time to time. One day when he used to play football (I think it was a special game) he was assigned to control now deceased Kadri Aytaç, a football myth. When he had the ball at his feet, it was impossible to stop him; so Hodja was trying to defense by charging and a little pulling and pushing. He told us laughing that Kadri once approached to Hodja and said in his ear "Hey ....., I don't mess with you because you are disabled, play properly, otherwise I'll .....you!". I know they became very good friends later.

Until a year ago, Hodja was in good shape, at least as in appearance, there was no sign of his disease and he was continuing with his normal life. Later, when the situation became clear, he was hospitalized in İstanbul University Cerrahpaşa Internal Diseases Clinic with symptoms of fatigue and exhaustion. He stayed there for months as a guest patient and entered a bad terminal period. The internal department staff and particularly Prof. Adnan Yaldiran tried to host Hodja with extraordinary care and devotion. Hodja and his visitors were playing the hardest roles of their lives pretending to ignore his illness. It was really very sad and devastating, but we played our roles very well. We gave the leading role again to Hodja, but his very valuable wife Suzan Kotoğyan deserved the best supporting actress award. While trying to entertain him laughing, playing in the room with him, her tears that she couldn't hold, hide and at times shed on our shoulders when she came to the hallway to say goodbye to us were the real life! She supported him with all her devotion and care until his last moments. In the last two weeks, a sudden collapse started as a sign of the end and then came the known, expected final!

Rest in peace.

Prof. Ertuğrul H. Aydemir