

DR. JOSEFINA GARCIA COEN

Dr. Josefina Garcia Coën was born in the city of La Vega, Dominican Republic, on the 5th. December, 1930. Her parents were Francisco García, a medical doctor and Esperanza Fernández.

Her primary studies were in her native city and her secondary in the Institute of Señoritas Salomé Ureña, in Santo Domingo.

She graduated as a Doctor in Medicine and was a "Student of Merit", from the Universidad Autónoma (Autonomy University), Santo Domingo on 28th October, 1955.

In 1956 she married the well-known shipper Oscar Coën and became mother to Oscar Leonardo and Sara Josefina.

In the US, Dr. Coën did rotating internship at the Hospital Misericordia of the New York University.

Later she became the assistant medical resident at the Internal Beth Davis New York Hospital.

She worked 7 years at the Albert Einstein Hospital, where she specialized in paediatrics, did extremely well and was promoted to be the Professor of Clinical Paediatrics. Likewise she was also the director of the clinic for renal and endocrine diseases at this institute and was a consultant for premature and newborns. In 1964, she became a member of the American Board of Paediatrics of USA.

A year later she decided to return to her country and at her farewell, her colleagues said the following: "Her loss will only be compensated if her country of origin knows how to make the most of her immense volume of knowledge."

In the Dominican Republic, she immediately started working as an honorary paediatrician offering her services at the Dr. Robert Reid Cabral Children's Hospital, taking charge of the Renal and Diabetic Clinic as Head of Clinical Paediatrics and Head Consultant of Metabolism and Endocrinology.

In the National Institute of Diabetics she was the Chief External Consultant and Chief of Paediatric Endocrinology (Diabetic clinic for Children and Adolescents).

In 1992 she was the Advisor and Supervisor of the Departments of Maternal Infant and Nutrition of the Secretary of State for Public Health and Social Assistance – SESPAS - , the Sub secretary of State for Public Health for 8 years (1992-2000) and honorary Coordinator of the National Breastfeeding Committee and Advisor for 16 years.

She was professor at the Universidad Autonoma of Santo Domingo for 30 years, professor for various generations of health professionals where in paediatrics, she taught breastfeeding, a pioneer in promoting natural diet through teaching. She always used to say that working in favour of breastfeeding was her mission.

She had been the coordinator of the Paediatric Department, professor of the Post Graduate studies, visiting professor of paediatric endocrinology at the National University of Pedro Henríquez Ureña and also the visiting professor at the Medical faculty of the University of Austria.

In the field of paediatric investigations, Dr. Coën had produced about 45 investigative works in the areas of endocrinology, nephrology and nutrition and infant nutrition.

The teacher as she was called by her students, was the president of the Dominican Society of Paediatrics (promoting the Infant Survival programmes), declared Teacher of Medicine by the Medical Association and teacher of Paediatrics by the Society of Paediatrics of Dominica.

She was also member of scientific societies like the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine in USA, Latin American International Association of diabetics and International Federation of Diabetics, amongst others.

Josefina Coën, was decorated by many institutions including received the "Woman of the Year" in 1992 by the then Director General for the Promotion of Women, awards for professional excellence in 2000 and 2006 by the President Dr. Leonel Fernández.

The doctor had never practiced medicine privately because there was not enough time for others who were not patients at the public paediatric hospital.

Many a times, in the hospitals, the teacher organized breastfeeding courses, using her own economic resources to cover costs.

Friend and loving professional, Dr. Josefina Garcia Coën was loved in her country and abroad. She displayed a very strong work habit, had a cheerful spirit, was engaged in the truth, held onto her ethical spirits, was studious, enthusiastic and was an example to follow.

Dr. CLAVEL SANCHEZ