

## Prof. Dr. João Tranchesí: Chronology of a fruitful life, 8 February 1922 – 12 October 1978

On 8 February 1922, the man who would become Brazil's most eminent electro-vectorcardiographer was born in the country's capital (as it was then) São Paulo. This was João Tranchesí, or just JT as he liked to be known). His father worked in a leather saddle factory and João was the third of five children.

JT started his studies in a public school (Amadeu Amaral) in the neighbourhood of Belém. He went to High School between 1934 and 1938, and then to preparatory academy for another two years to access medical education (1939–1940). In 1941, he graduated as a medical doctor, finishing second in a class of 102. After graduation, he won a scholarship in cardiology as a 'Fellow in Medicine' at Georgetown University, Washington DC, in the United States of America (Fig. 1).

He worked there from 1950 to 1951 under the supervision of the legendary Prof. Proctor Harvey. It was here he collaborated in the preparation of a book by Dr. Joseph Barker called 'Unipolar Electrocardiography'.

JT's cardiology residency between 1951 and 1953 was in the prestigious National Institute of Cardiology in Mexico. At that time, the Institute was considered the most important school on electro-vectorcardiography in the whole world and

JT had the opportunity to be supervised by Prof. Dr. Ignacio Chavez Rivera.

During his stay in the Institute, he had as teachers and peers great figures of the Mexican Cardiology school, such as Demétrio Sodi-Pallares, Enrique Cabrera, Gaxiola, de Michelis, Rafael Carral, Hernán Villareal and Peñaloza among others (Fig. 2).

In 1954, JT was appointed Full Time Investigator at the Electrocardiography Service of the Ignacio Chavez Institute of Mexico. In that year also, he got his degree as Specialist in Cardiology in the city where he was born, São Paulo.

On returning to Brazil, he was appointed Chief Physician of the Service of Electrocardiography of the Hospital of Clinics from the School of Medicine at the USP, a position that he held with great prestige and enthusiasm for a decade (1956–1966).

During this period he delivered several courses that were attended by great figures from the electro-vectorcardiography field at national and international levels, for example Arthur Grishman from Columbia University (1955), Demétrio Sodi-Pallares (1958), Joseph Féhr (1958), and Ernest Simonson from the University of Minnesota (1959). In turn, JT was invited to deliver courses on electro-vectorcardiography in several countries of Latin America as well as the USA.



**Figure 1.** JT with a wood structure that represents the three main vectors of the heart.



**Figure 2.** From right to left: JT, Prof. Dr. Demétrio Sodi-Pallares and Dr. Dante Peñaloza.

From 1970 until his too early death, he served as Full Professor at the Medical Clinic of the School of Medicine in Jundiaí.

He had a prolific academic life, preparing his doctoral thesis in 1965 on “Considerations on Atrial Ectopic Rhythms: Originated in areas close to the coronary sinus”. His thesis on “Behavior of instantaneous vectors of ventricular depolarization in carriers of Fallot complex who undergo total surgical correction” obtained him a professorship in 1972.

JT was Editor of the ‘Arquivos Brasileiros de Cardiologia’, the only indexed cardiology journal of Brazil; he was also President of the Fund for the Improvement and Investigation in Cardiology (FUNCOR), Associate Editor of the Journal of Electrocardiology, and Governor of the American College of Chest Physicians in São Paulo (1974).

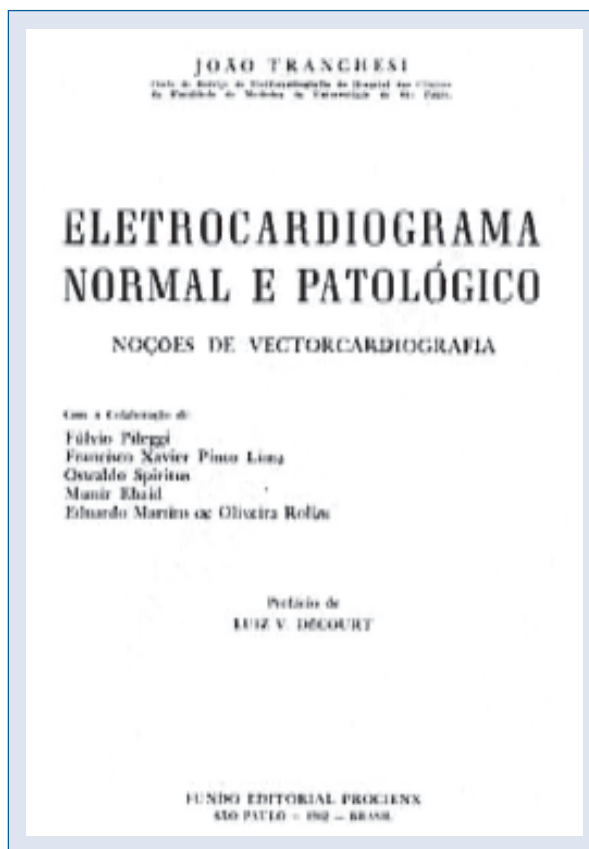
Along with his colleagues at the prestigious Heart Institute (InCor), he wrote 128 original manuscripts (24 as first author) in journals such as the American Heart Journal, the American Journal of Cardiology, Circulation, Journal of Electrocardiology, Archivos del Instituto de Cardiología (Mexico), Arquivos Brasileiros de Cardiologia, and others.

JT wrote four books on electro-vectorcardiography: “Vectorial Electrocardiography,” “Experimental Electrophysiology,” “Exercises on Interpretation,” and his major international contribution “Normal and Pathological Electrocardiograms — Notions on Vectorcardiography”. The latter went through six editions in Portuguese, five in Spanish, and two in Italian (Fig. 3).

There are many stories that could illustrate how much respect his peers had for JT’s work, One involves one of his followers, Dr. Juarez Ortiz, who used to say that they challenged JT with difficult electrocardiograms (ECGs). Could there exist an ECG that JT would not be able to interpret? At that time, Ortiz worked in the Coronary Unit and the new monitors were linked to a central station that enabled the selection of one of the beds to record the ECG. A technical problem led the equipment to produce a rare artefact. At some point, the monitor recorded bed number 5. But at the same time, bed number 6 was also being recorded. Thus, in the same ECG, there was a recording from both patients.

With the aim of talking to the engineers of the manufacturing company, Dr. Ortiz kept a long strip of approximately 30 cm. The next day, he gave the strange ECG recording to JT, and asked him, feigning indifference: “Professor, what is your opinion of this electrocardiographic tracing?”

JT looked at the ECG for a few seconds, and said: “This is all you have?”



**Figure 3.** The cover of his most important book entitled: “Normal and Pathological Electrocardiogram — Notions on Vectorcardiography”.

Ortiz answered: “Regrettably, yes.”

“What is this lead? Do you know?”

Ortiz answered:

“It must be any bipolar lead, obtained through the chest electrodes.”

At this point, as Ortiz was regretting being “mean” with his professor and was ready to confess to the technical problem, JT gave him back the tracing saying:

“I don’t know what this is, but it seems that this individual has two hearts.” (Fig. 4).

JT was a fine example as a husband and father. Curiously, he and his older brother, another famous cardiologist, Bernardino, fell in love with and married two sisters, Odette (JT) and Ida Moras (Bernardino). Both couples had five children. While João had five sons, Bernardino had four daughters and only one son, also called Bernardino, who also went on to become a cardiologist.

The five sons of João were: João (who became a lawyer), Fábio (civil engineer), Ricardo (heart surgeon), Roberto (civil engineer), and Fernando

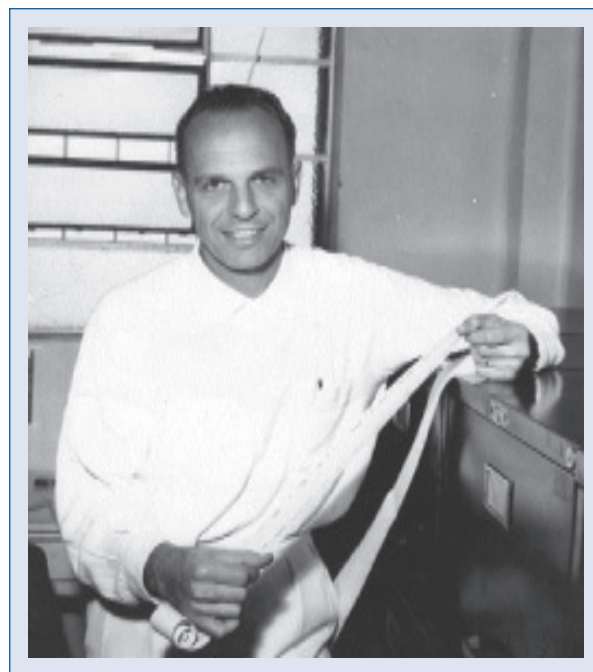


**Figure 4.** JT surrounded by his pupils and colleagues, in the Electrocardiographic Sector of the Hospital das Clínicas in São Paulo.



**Figure 5.** On the right is JT, and in the middle the famous Prof. Euryclides de Jesus Zerbini, Latin American pioneer of heart transplantation.

(production engineer). João kept very fit. He was a keen tennis player who practiced regularly for several hours at a time. Unfortunately, he suffered from familial hypercholesterolemia, that when he was only 44 years of age, led to the need for revascularization. The surgery was performed in the USA using a primitive technique developed before the saphenous bypass graft established by the great Argentinean surgeon, and personal friend of João,



**Figure 6.** JT with an electrocardiogram strip in his hands.

Dr. René Favaloro. The atherosclerotic disease, of surreptitious and insidious course, took the life of our great master all too early, on 12 October 1978, when he was only 56 years old.

Never again would Brazilian electro-vectorcardiography have a master of such scientific, human, and didactic stature. However, JT left great followers behind him. Prof. Dr. Paulo Moffa, Carlos Alberto Pastore, and Nancy Tobias are some of the best examples (Figs. 5, 6).

JT will always be remembered with affection, warmth and admiration by all of us.

### Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Dr. Tranchesí's widow, Mrs. Odette Moras, and their son, Ricardo, who generously provided us with the memories and the beautiful pictures shown in this memorial.

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