

ANTONI PUIGVERT I GORRO

PUIGVERT EPONYMS

The eponyms

Puigvert operation. Intravesical ureterorrhaphy and cystorrhaphy¹, habitually used for tuberculosis infections of the urinary system (barely used today)². It involved reimplanting the ureter in a urinary bladder affected by tuberculosis. Díaz-Rubio³ claims that partial nephrectomy to treat kidney stones, first recommended by Puigvert, should also be called Puigvert operation.

Megacalycosis or Puigvert disease. A disease of the renal calyces described by Puigvert in 1963^{4,5} consisting of dilation and deformation of all the calyces, with few or no changes in the renal pelvis and normal cortical parenchyma, resulting in only a decrease in the volume of the medulla and distortion of its shape, which in turn contributes to the enlargement of the calyceal cavity⁶.



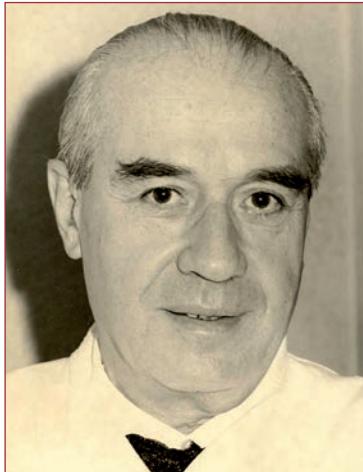
Antoni Puigvert
i Gorro (1905-1990)

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Antoni Puigvert i Gorro was born in Santa Coloma de Gramenet (Barcelona) on 26 April 1905. He studied medicine at the *Universitat de Barcelona*, graduating in 1928⁷. He was an intern with Manuel Serés i Ibars (1888-1928), professor of anatomy and urology, with whom he began his training. Serés was a young man who had studied urology in Paris, becoming a professor at the age of 34. Serés had good political contacts at that time, and he was appointed dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the *Universitat de Barcelona* in 1924 by Primo de Rivera's government⁸. Unfortunately, he died prematurely of a serious renal infection, and Puigvert was left without a teacher or protector. For some reason, he did not get along with the new professor, Salvador Gil i Vernet, and had to practise his profession from below to make headway. Notwithstanding, a grateful patient financed an internship for him at the *Inselspital* in Bern, where he extended his studies with Wildbolz in 1932. He also visited the *Hôpital Lariboisière* in Paris where he trained with Félix Legueu and Georges Marion³. But the next year he returned to Barcelona and gained a post as an auxiliary physician in the urology department at the *Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau*.

The year 1941 was important for Puigvert; he earned his doctorate in Madrid and was appointed assistant physician. Three years later, he founded the journal *Archivos Españoles de Urología* (Spanish Urology Archives) with Cifuentes Delatte and Pérez Castro. In 1951, his professional capabilities were recognised when he was appointed head of the urology department at the *Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau*. Puigvert began to reorganise the department, transforming it into the Institute of Urology, which he also directed (1953)⁹.

Yet Puigvert had his sights on an even greater goal. In 1961, he finally created the *Fundació Puigvert*, which is discussed later. At this institution, he took on significant teaching work in training new urology specialists from Spain and abroad. Recognition of this work arrived in 1971 when he

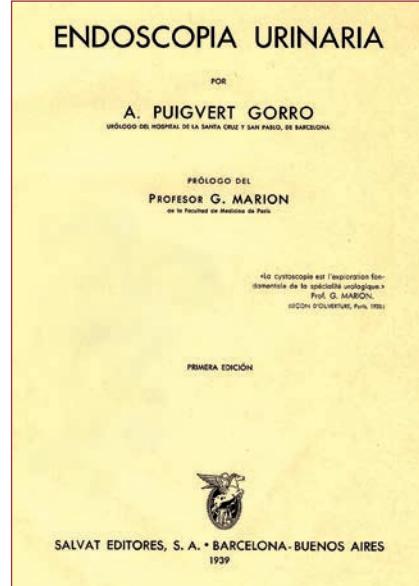


Antoni Puigvert i Gorro, c. 1960s

was appointed extraordinary professor of urology by the Ministry of Education, attached to the recently created Faculty of Medicine at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*, which in those early days was located at the *Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau*.

Antoni Puigvert's professional activity was wide-ranging. At a very young age, he began publishing works of great interest, such as the *Atlas de urografía* (Atlas of urography, 1933), just four years after doing the world's first urogram. His *Tuberculosis renal* (Renal tuberculosis, 1936-1937) made up issues 103-104 of the *Monografies Mèdiques de l'Acadèmia* (Monographs of the Academy of Medical Sciences). Other important books were *Endoscopia urinaria* (Urinary endoscopy, 1939), earning him the 1942 Rubio Prize of the National Academy of Medicine, *La tuberculosis genitourinaria* (Genitourinary tuberculosis, 1941), *Tratado de urografía clínica* (Treatise on clinical urography, 1944), *Tuberculosis urinaria y genital masculina* (Male genital and urinary tuberculosis, 1958), *Tratado de operatoria urológica* (Treatise on urological surgery, 1981), and *Semiología medular del riñón. Estudio clínico y radiográfico* (Medullary semiology of the kidney: clinical and radiographical study,

Cover of Puigvert's work *Endoscopia urinaria* (Urinary endoscopy)



1981). Puigvert was also known for the invention of new surgical instruments such as Béniqué probe, a prostatoperineal surgery bascule³, a 20 ml syringe for pyelography with propulsion with screw and special adjustment for urethral probes (known as the Puigvert tutor probe –another eponym), forceps with unequal arms, the double separator, and the dissecting and suture forceps¹⁰.

Puigvert was honoured with numerous awards during his lifetime. On 20 April 1952, he was appointed a member of the *Reial Acadèmia de Medicina de Barcelona*; his acceptance speech was entitled "Bladder tumours: natural history and basis for anatomical and clinical classification", which was answered by Joaquim Trias i Pujol. Furthermore, he received several Spanish honours, such as the Gold Medal of Barcelona, and the *Creu de Sant Jordi* (one of the highest awards for civil achievement in Catalonia). His foreign honours included the *Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* (France), as well as others from Argentina, Brazil, Chile,

Santo Domingo, and Panama. He was also made honorary professor of universities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, California, and Israel⁹.

Puigvert was one of those rare characters who occasionally crop up in Catalan society. With a strong personality, and deeply rooted, if sometimes controversial, opinions, demanding that work be well done, a magnificent manager and tireless worker, he was during his lifetime what we might call a politically eclectic character. His cordial relations with Franco's dictatorship, to the extent that Franco inaugurated his Foundation in 1966, did not stop Puigvert from being chosen as a member of the Parliament of Catalonia by the party *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* in the first democratic elections just 11 years later. His skill at navigating the treacherous currents of politics was quite a feat for somebody who was basically a physician.

Antoni Puigvert died in Barcelona on 18 May 1990 after an 85-year life packed with work and achievements.

Fundació Puigvert

This foundation is without a doubt Puigvert's greatest work, for which he lived and worked his entire adult life. When he was appointed head of the urology department at the *Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau*, Puigvert expressed the need to create a centre dedicated to urological diseases. His idea was to enlarge and improve the Institute of Urology he had created in 1943 in his private clinic. This institute had 38 beds, of which almost a third were for patients with limited financial resources. His desire to transfer it to the *Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau* was finally accepted after difficult negotiations. The hospital granted him a pavillion, *Pavelló de l'Assumpció*, where the urology department was based, which was renamed the Institute of Urology. Finally, the *Fundació* was created from the hospital's department of urology in a new building¹¹.

Puigvert contributed to the creation of *Fundació Puigvert* with the proceeds from the sale of his private clinic, the donation of his library, and 64,000 medical case histories⁹. In 1966, a new building was inaugurated, and the maximum political authorities of the time attended the ceremony. The following year a school to train specialists in areas related to the genitourinary system opened, where numerous Spanish and Latin American physicians were trained. With a vision for the future, rather than dedicate the institution solely to urology, Puigvert conceived it as a centre for the comprehensive treatment of diseases of the genitourinary system and thus also employed nephrologists and andrologists.

Fundació Puigvert was created with a vocation to offer the best possible treatment for the conditions that prompted its creation. Its founder may have had a difficult personality, but no one could refute his great dedication to his profession or his constant, thorough desire for things to work as well as possible. The prestige achieved by *Fundació Puigvert* from the very beginning, which only increased over time, made it one of the leading institutions in urological practice worldwide. After its founder's



*Fundació Puigvert,
within the grounds
of the Hospital
de la Santa Creu
i Sant Pau*

death, *Fundació Puigvert's* continued success attests to Puigvert's knowing how to choose the best collaborators from among the finest professionals in each area.

Megacalycosis or Puigvert disease

In 1963, Puigvert published an article in *Medicina Clínica*⁴ analysing the problem of interpreting and naming the dilatations of renal calyces. Using radiological criteria, he distinguished between "megacalycosis", which according to Puigvert was incorrectly called "intrarenal" hydronephrosis, to refer to generalised caliectasis, "hydrocaliectasis" to refer to caliectasis of the hydrocalyx, and "calyceal diverticulum", whether nephrogenous or pyelogenous, to refer to caliectasis of the residual cavities connecting with the calyces where stones nested. After a review of the medical literature showing the general confusion, Puigvert proposed the term "megacalycosis" to define degenerative or hypoplastic diseases of the calyces characterised by an increase in the number, size, and volumes of the calyceal spaces with deformation of the latter and with no obstructive elements to explain their appearance. In contrast, hydrocaliectasis was the distension of one or a group of minor calyces that flow into a major calyx, due to obstruction of the calyx neck, with consequent accumulation of urine and accompanying dilation. This retention was one of the elements for the differential diagnosis with megacalycosis. After certain considerations on the origin, interpretation of urographic signs, and approach to treatment, Puigvert summarised his views: "In short, we must define megacalycosis as generalised calyceal malformation with distension of these cavities through hypoplastic medullary thinning without modifying the cortical tissue or functional abnormalities of the kidney or renal pelvis, and without retention in both cavities"⁴. The entity described by Puigvert was not immediately recognised; it was not until 1973 when Gittes, an American physician, first mentioned Puigvert's disease to the Anglo-Saxon world. Nevertheless, this proposal had no success and the entity described

is known as congenital megacalyces, megacalyces, or megacalycosis. The latter term is slightly different from the one Puigvert proposed⁶. Yet in this case, the eponym did not take hold, although this does not make the Catalan urologist's observation any less interesting.

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