

CORNERSTONE

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The Bazan Superchair

Nicolas G. Bazan, MD, PhD, Boyd Professor & Villere Professor of Ophthalmology, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology & Neurology. Director, The LSUHSC Neuroscience Center of Excellence

Writing about Dr. Nicolas Bazan isn't easy—not because there isn't anything to write—but because there is so much. Given his bigger than life personality, his bigger than life contributions to science in the field of neuroscience, his tireless efforts on behalf of LSU Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC) and our community, and his connections to eminent scientists and personalities worldwide—his is not one story, it is hundreds.

Yet, there is one story not widely known, a personal story of Dr. Bazan's battle against advanced prostate cancer. It is not about what he gave up, but how he continues to give.

"There are three reasons that moved me to make the initial contribution to endow a new superchair," he told me. "The first is because I have two sons, two grandsons, and two sons-in-law. The second is that I am convinced that the only way to conquer prostate cancer and other

diseases is the acquisition of new knowledge through research. Third, the establishment of a \$2 million superchair will allow LSUHSC to attract an outstanding physician-scientist.

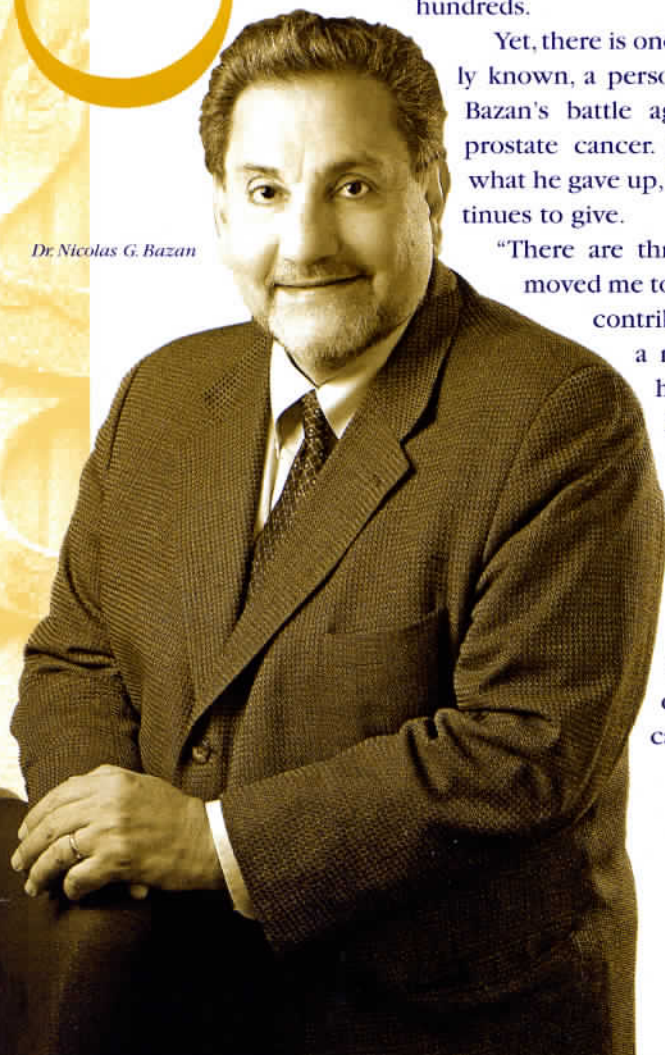
Over five years ago, when Dr. Bazan first heard the diagnosis of his advanced prostate cancer, his thoughts were not so much for himself, but for the young scientists in the LSU Neuroscience Center. "I just didn't want to discourage those whom I was so lucky in attracting," he said, "because sometimes when the diagnosis is of an advanced nature, the prognosis isn't so good. For that reason, I only told a few—my family, my Dean and the Chancellor."

Few people guessed either. He continued his work, pushing himself beyond the fatigue and discomfort that accompanies cancer treatment. Since an operation was not an option, Dr. Bazan had to undergo two rounds of radiation therapy and strong hormonal therapy. He talks in a matter-of-fact way about the hot flashes from the hormone treatment that still occur many times a day and keep him awake at night. Somewhere interspersed in his conversation is a casual reference to recent hip-replacement surgery and the physical therapy he receives.

His manner, in every way, belies five-plus years of intense challenges.

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Dr. Nicolas G. Bazan



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He cites several factors in his ability to cope.

Five years ago, Dr. Bazan's son, Dr. Hernan A. Bazan, insisted he go for a PSA (prostate specific antigen) test. He hadn't had one in quite some time. In fact, for years, his PSA had been undetectable. Nor did he have symptoms of any kind. When Hernan appealed to his dad to take time-out to have a PSA, he complied, a decision that proved vital in his survival. Hernan had graduated from Georgetown School of Medicine and was about to begin a surgical residency at Mt. Sinai in New York. Yet, he demonstrated his concern for his father by staying in constant touch and helping with the ins and outs of the treatment process.

All of Dr. Bazan's family, especially daughters Patricia Garrubbo, Andrea Manson, Maria E. Bazan and sons Hernan and Nicolas G. Bazan II were prime factors in his recovery. But it was his wife, Dr. Haydee Bazan, who did one important thing.

"My eating habits were not ideal," he said. "I grew up in Argentina eating lots of meat—not the best for optimum health. For several years Haydee had been concerned about our diet. About 10 years ago, she shifted the family to a diet containing more seafood, vegetables and less meat. I joke that I like to go out with my friends when they come to town, or when I travel, so I can eat in a 'normal' way. But most of the time, I have followed what Haydee engineered. This was a most important factor in my recovery, in addition to her support.

"I am grateful, also, for the group of doctors who guided me. Dr. Oliver Sartor was extraordinary with his advice to me. Dr. Alfred Colfry, an outstanding person, urologist and my primary physi-



Dr. Nicolas G. Bazan

cian, directed my care. He still does, as does radiation oncologist Dr. Luis Linares. Several doctor friends helped me identify Drs. Colfry and Linares; I will always remember with gratitude the advice and concern of my friends Drs. Sergio Schabelman and Cody Caputto."

Dr. Bazan's cancer is in remission today, and his PSA has been undetectable for almost 5 years. His personal experience and his desire to protect others encouraged him to begin a specific plan of action that would concentrate on seeking answers to what goes on in prostate cancer, as well as the biology of the prostate itself. He wants that to happen at LSUHSC.

Dr. Bazan is working closely with prostate cancer expert, Dr. Oliver Sartor, Director of the Stanley S. Scott Cancer at LSU and Co-Director of the Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium, to develop a full research program. When the Superchair is fully funded, it will mark the beginning of intensive research efforts specific to conquering prostate cancer.

Those who know Dr. Bazan are struck by his zeal for his work, his joy in living well, and in his courtly manner, exhibited in the respect he shows associates, friends and family.

"All my life I've had a positive outlook," he told me. "My father, who still lives in Argentina, is a healthy 94-year-old, and his brain is perfect. My mother went back to school in her 50s, finished law school at 60 and practiced law for two decades. She died six years ago at 84." Their enduring courage, in spite of the challenges they faced, contributed to my drive, purpose and optimistic attitude. The political regime in Argentina took many innocent lives.

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Dr. Oliver Sartor

Dr. Oliver Sartor, Director of the LSU Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center says, "I am extraordinarily grateful to Dr. Nicolas Bazan for his generous donation of a very substantial lead gift to establish the Bazan Superchair for Prostate Cancer Research. I firmly believe that investments like this will not only lead to improvements in patient care but will give LSU leverage in attracting the very best scientists in this important research area. We are grateful to Dr. Bazan for all

he does in his many endeavors, especially in the critical role he played in establishing this important new endowed superchair. We now need your help. Our goals are ambitious, but we can realize them with your donation. Please give generously to this important cause."

The Nicolas G. Bazan, MD, PhD Superchair in Prostate Cancer Research

About three years ago, Dr. Nicolas Bazan initiated the creation of a \$2 million superchair with a personal gift of \$200,000. Since then, others have contributed to the endowment, including his family. To date, the endowment totals about \$400,000 with another \$800,000 needed to complete funding. Then the Louisiana State Board of Regents will match those funds with \$800,000 to complete the establishment of a \$2 million superchair.

The completion of this superchair is crucial if LSU Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC) is to attract and recruit a world-class expert in prostate cancer research. It takes that kind of commitment for LSUHSC to remain competitive in today's market.

"The investigator we seek will be dedicated to finding a cure for prostate cancer. He will have a program of his own—one that he will bring with him and further develop at LSUHSC. We are eager to begin the search for such an investigator when

the endowment is near completion," says Dr. Oliver Sartor.

In addition to scientific impact, the presence of this eminent scientist and this targeted program will have a significant economic impact in the community with the creation of new jobs and opportunities for pharmaceutical development. It will lead to the development of discovery programs where new therapeutics can be developed. It will attract new grants, which in turn will generate more funds for more research. And it will attract top investigators.

The establishment of this superchair will begin a work that will specifically target prostate cancer, a disease that is wreaking havoc in the lives of too many good men. Prostate cancer kills 30,000 American men each year.

If you would like to join in the fight against prostate cancer with a contribution to the Bazan Superchair, please call Melissa Ogden at 504-568-5718.

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In 1981, Haydee and I had to flee the country with our five children.”

Dr. Bazan did not tell me the purpose of a recent trip, one that illustrates a spirit of giving to those in need. I found out from someone else. As he did not seek any recognition, he was reluctant to tell me about it. Finally, at my urging, he did.

Since the 11th century, the Order of Malta has been committed to “defense of the Faith and assistance to the poor and suffering.” As a Knight and Dame of the Order, the Drs. Bazan make these principles a reality. Early in March this year, they spent a week of their vacation as medical missionaries in Granada, Nicaragua.

“First and foremost,” Dr. Bazan told me, “I believe I am telling you this story today because of my faith in God. As a consequence, I think I have the hand of God behind me. It is absolutely the reason I am here.”

Fighting A Common Enemy

Edwin Garrubbo has fond memories of New Orleans. It’s where he met his wife, the former Patricia Bazan, where he received a law degree at Tulane, and a place he and his wife consider a home away from home with

the Bazan family. Until five years ago, they could not have imagined a scenario in which the Bazans and Garrubbos would be linked in a battle against a common enemy.

During the same time frame in which Dr. Nicolas Bazan received a diagnosis of prostate cancer, Mr. Mario V. Garrubbo heard the same troubling news from his doctors in New

Jersey. Mr. Garrubbo lost his fight with prostate cancer November 2003. Dr. Bazan is in remission and fighting back with his initiation of the Bazan Superchair for Prostate Cancer Research.

To date, Garrubbo family members and friends have contributed over \$40,000 toward establishment of the Bazan Superchair. Edwin Garrubbo and his brothers, Mario Jr. and Philip,

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continue in their efforts toward a goal of \$100,000 to name a research laboratory at the LSU Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center in memory of their father.

In February of this year, the Garrubbos, Drs. Nicolas Bazan and Oliver Sartor, and the Foundation for the LSU Health Sciences Center hosted a reception in New Jersey for Garrubbo and Bazan family and friends. The gathering provided a forum where people came together with common interests and a common goal—to raise additional funds for the Bazan chair.

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