In Memory of Professor José Manuel García-Verdugo

With great sadness, we say goodbye to José Manuel García-Verdugo, Emeritus Professor of Cell Biology at the University of Valencia, born in Ceuta on November 6, 1953, who passed away on July 7. Professor García-Verdugo was an exceptional researcher and an international reference in the study of stem cells and neurogenesis in vertebrates. His loss leaves an irreplaceable void in the scientific community, but also a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire generations of researchers.

His professional career began with a degree in Biological Sciences from the University of La Laguna, where he met Elia Cabrera, his partner and mother of his sons, Carlos and Jorge. He earned his PhD from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, where he was the first to describe neural stem cells and the migration routes of new neurons in lizards—discoveries that marked a turning point in modern neuroscience.
At the University of Valencia, first as Associate Professor and later as Full Professor, his research expanded to other species, including humans. His stays at leading institutions such as Rockefeller University in New York and the University of California, San Francisco, consolidated a fruitful collaboration and friendship with Arturo Álvarez-Buylla. Together, they were the first to identify in mammals the cells responsible for adult neurogenesis, describing them as a subpopulation of astrocytes and establishing the organization of neurogenic niches.

Moreover, Professor García-Verdugo was a pioneer in the use of electron microscopy to unravel the ultrastructure of neural stem cells, developing innovative methodologies that earned him worldwide recognition. As one colleague said, he “restored dignity to electron microscopy.” His crucial advances in understanding neuronal migration pathways in the human brain during early postnatal stages have opened new perspectives on brain development.

Undoubtedly, his research group at the Cavanilles Institute of Biodiversity and Evolutionary Biology and at CIBERNED has been a hub of talent and a benchmark in morphological neuroscience. Throughout his brilliant career, he received numerous awards and honors, including the Ramón y Cajal Award from the Spanish Society of Neurology, the Diario Médico Research Award, and the Award for Canarian Scientists Abroad. He was a member of the Royal National Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences, a trustee of the General Hospital of Valencia, and a member of the Governing Board of the CSIC. In September 2025, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Autonomy of Ceuta, his hometown.

José Manuel had been a member of the Expert Committee of the Museu de les Ciències Príncipe Felipe in Valencia since 2006, where he always stood out for his discretion and wisdom in all his contributions.

José Manuel García-Verdugo leaves behind a legacy that goes far beyond his publications and the 23 PhD theses he supervised. He leaves a school of scientific thought—rigorous, open, and collaborative—and the example of a life devoted to expanding our understanding of one of biology's greatest mysteries: the brain's ability to generate new neurons. His work has inspired, and will continue to inspire, new lines of research in neuroregeneration and translational medicine.
At this time of farewell, his family, friends, colleagues, and students remember not only the brilliant scientist, but also the man of integrity, the loyal friend, and the teacher and mentor who knew how to guide and listen. Those of us who had the privilege of learning by his side will remember him as a calm and gentle man, who remained composed in moments of tension and always supported his students—students for whom he always had time, and to whom he instilled his love of science.

Thank you, dear José Manuel, for your example, your dedication, and the indelible mark you leave on science and on all of us who had the good fortune to know you. Your memory will live on in the work you built and in the people you shaped. We will miss you deeply.

Rest in peace.