

Twelve facts you should know about Francisco Lopera Restrepo

By: Unidad de Apropiación Social del Conocimiento

Dr. Francisco Lopera Restrepo's interest in Alzheimer's disease, a progressive and irreversible brain disorder that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills, was sparked by a personal family situation, leading him to study the disease for over 40 years.

1 | Our beloved Dr. Lopera was born in the home of Luis Emir and Blanca in the village of Aragón, in the municipality of Santa Rosa de Osos, Antioquia, on June 10, 1951. He spent his early years there until the family moved to Yarumal.

2 | He was one of 13 siblings – the eldest of the boys – and he enjoyed a peaceful childhood with them.

3 | As a child, he wanted to memorize the entire dictionary, but at the San Carlos school in Medellín, where he finished high school, he changed his mind and strengthened his desire to become a doctor.

4 | He studied Medicine and specialized in Neurology at the bicentennial *Universidad de Antioquia*. Later, he had the opportunity to continue his studies in Belgium, where he graduated in Pediatric Neuropsychology.

“I didn't choose Alzheimer's as my focus, Alzheimer's chose me.”

Francisco Lopera Restrepo



5 | During his studies in Neurological Medicine, he conducted research on Alzheimer's disease, its genetics and variants. His first project as a Neurology resident focused on language disorders and brain connections.

6 | His project on familial Alzheimer's disease in Antioquia led him to discover the "Paiza mutation," a variant characterized by a mix of neurodegeneration and dementia. The study's findings were published in *Nature* journal.

"The Paiza mutation is an error in the genetic code that causes memory loss and early-onset Alzheimer's."

Francisco Lopera Restrepo

7 | He enjoyed teaching, which is why he became a professor at his alma mater, the UdeA. There, he also pursued his path as a researcher, becoming a member and coordinator of the *Grupo de Neurociencias de Antioquia*, which grew to have over 150 partners.

8 | With Aliria Rosa, a patient who came to his office, he found a path to discover a potential cure for Alzheimer's, "a protective gene" that provided clues for curing one of humanity's most feared diseases, which is also widespread in our country.

9 | He co-founded the only brain bank in Colombia, where Aliria's brain is the most famous and studied.

10 | In 2024, he was awarded the Potamkin Prize, presented by the American Academy of Neurology and the American Brain Foundation, an award considered by many to be the Nobel Prize of neuroscience.

11 | Being with his family, dedicating time to sports, especially swimming, and enjoying music and nature were always his greatest pleasures. He also loved spending time with his friends and colleagues from different generations.

12 | On September 10, 2024, he passed away in Medellín, twenty-five days after saying goodbye to his colleagues at the *Instituto Colombiano de Neurociencias*. His life was entirely devoted to helping others.

Illustrations: Daniela
Suárez Segura y Sofía
Montoya Mejía

These twelve facts about Dr. Francisco Lopera Restrepo were the result of extensive search from various public domain sources. Ingenio thanks *Beatriz Elena Marín Ochoa*, leader of the Unidad de Apropriación Social del Conocimiento at UPB, for her commitment to the development of this content.