

## James Pitágoras de Mattos December 28, 1942 – February 2, 2026



James was born on December 28, 1942, in the city of Porto Murtinho, in the state of Mato Grosso, where he completed his early education. Son of José Augusto de Mattos and Nise Mesquita de Mattos, he moved to Rio de Janeiro at the age of 12. In 1962, he began his medical studies at the Medical School of the University of Brazil, now the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). The university was located near the Urca neighborhood and was the most prestigious in Brazil.

He was always a brilliant student, standing out among 200 classmates. In 1967, deciding to specialize in neurology, he completed his internship at the Institute of Neurology (IN), now known as the Deolindo Couto Institute of Neurology (INDC/UFRJ). Upon finishing medical school, he took the residency exam for the IN, achieving first place. Initially, he was a disciple of Abdo Badim and the favorite assistant of Professor Deolindo Couto.

At the end of his residency, due to his outstanding performance, Deolindo appointed him Assistant Professor with a 40-hour weekly schedule. At that time, the IN was considered the Mecca of Brazilian neurology. Excelling in his profession, he was chosen to head the medical residency program. Numerous neurologists from almost every Brazilian state were trained by him.

Early in his career, he began presenting research at congresses and publishing his work. In 1972, during the *Brazilian Neurology Congress* in Rio de Janeiro, he became a Full Member of the *Brazilian Academy of Neurology*, with the work "*Spinal Cord Compression Syndrome in a Patient with Klippel-Trenaunay-Parkes-Weber Syndrome*".

This was the first reported case worldwide of this syndrome with neurological involvement.

At that time, levodopa had been discovered for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. James was a pioneer in Brazil in the use of this medication. He conducted research on Saturday mornings, helping numerous patients improve their symptoms. He presented this work at the *Pan American Congress* in Mexico.

He dedicated himself to studying this condition, attending various congresses in Brazil and abroad. In 1979, he defended his master's thesis titled "*Levodopa in Parkinsonism*", earning the highest

grade. He continued his studies on the disease, publishing numerous papers in Brazilian and international journals.

In 1988, he defended his doctoral thesis, titled "*The Contribution of Electron Microscopy to the Study of Parkinsonism*". A reference both in Brazil and internationally, he stood out as one of the foremost experts on movement disorders.

At the Brazilian Neurology Congress, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1980, James served as *Secretary General*, chosen by President Sérgio Novis. When the Souza Marques School of Medicine was founded, he was invited by Bernardo Couto, the Head of the Neurology Department, to be his assistant, along with Sérgio Novis, José Luiz Cavalcanti, Bernardo Couto Filho, and me.

With the inauguration of the Clementino Fraga Filho University Hospital (HUCFF/UFRJ) in *Fundão*, James transferred there, becoming one of the best doctors specializing in movement disorders. At that time, he had already passed the exams for Adjunct Professor and soon after for Associate Professor. He retired early, before reaching the mandatory retirement age. Had he continued at the university, he would undoubtedly have become a Full Professor.

James was known for his honesty, firmness of character, and seriousness in neurological sciences. He also saw private patients in his office on Rua Santa Clara, in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro.

During the years of the military dictatorship, at the Medical School in Praia Vermelha, we participated in the student resistance. Beyond that, James was a scholar. He frequented theaters and art cinemas in Rio de Janeiro. We discussed music critiques; while I was dedicated to Baroque and classical music, James had a deep understanding of contemporary music.

In our penultimate year of medical school, we founded the Medical School's film club. On Fridays, we would screen art films in a large room of the building designed by Miguel Couto, films provided by the embassies of European countries. James wrote mimeographed reviews that were distributed to attendees.

He married Vania Maria de Barros Corrêa in 1982, who had been his student during residency at the IN. He always lived in Urca, his favorite neighborhood. From his union with Vania, he left two children: Marina (a lawyer) and Pedro (an IT analyst), and two grandchildren: Roberto and Isabel.

His mission on Earth was fulfilled as a professor, scientist, and lover of the arts, leaving behind sincere friends and a united family.

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