

The last chapter, a continuous memory: IN MEMORIAM Dr. CĂTĂLIN TUFĂNARU

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There are moments in life when silence suddenly falls over the noise of our daily activities, leaving behind a void that cannot be measured in words. The early departure of our dear colleague and friend leaves behind a void, but also a professional legacy that fully deserves to be evoked in the pages of this journal. Today our offices seem emptier, and the books on the shelves of the institution's library seem to wear their pages at half-mast.

The philosopher Henri Bergson used to say that, naturally, the past does not disappear, but extends into the actuality of the present, and our present is nothing more than a continuous accumulation of the past. In the activity he carried out, as in life, nothing of what he built is lost. Every idea he debated, every page read, every word written, and every result obtained integrated organically into the foundation of our work today.

Born in Braşov on April 14, 1970 – Deceased in Sydney, Australia on July 29, 2021, Cătălin was an enthusiastic researcher, teacher, and author, full of energy in the fields of public health, statistics, evidence-based healthcare, and the systematic review process. A graduate of the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest, he trained and practiced as a family physician before becoming a specialist in public health and management. Cătălin continued by working as a public health researcher at the National Institute for Research and Development in Health [I.N.C.D.S.] in Bucharest. During that period, while attending a Guidelines International Network conference in Adelaide, Australia, he visited the headquarters of JBI [Joanna Briggs Institute] and decided to establish a JBI Collaborating Center in Romania. With great tenacity, he

navigated the bureaucratic processes of the Romanian public health system and succeeded in establishing the JBI Center, which operates within the National Institute for Health Services Management [the successor of I.N.C.D.S.], which remains active to this day.

In 2009, Cătălin applied for a research fellow position at JBI in Adelaide, and he and his wife moved to Australia. Both proudly became Australian citizens in 2014. He read widely and deeply in the fields of theology, philosophy, and research methodology. This was partly related to the successful completion of a Master of Clinical Science and a PhD focused on the philosophical and methodological foundations of qualitative synthesis; but in reality, this was Cătălin's passion and sole hobby.

He was disappointed by what he considered to be corruption and elitism in the new democratic regime that emerged after the revolution and became a staunch supporter of freedom of speech and vigorous, rigorous debates. He was passionate in his views and will be remembered by his fellow PhD students for his dedicated, vehement, and sometimes controversial arguments about statistics, quantitative synthesis, and qualitative synthesis.

Researchers worldwide who attended Cătălin's courses on statistics, evidence synthesis, and the methodological issues and controversies surrounding evidence-based healthcare will remember his enthusiasm and dedication. During this period, Cătălin made a series of significant contributions to JBI and the field of evidence-based healthcare. He was the main driver and first author of the JBI Manual for Systematic Reviews of Effectiveness, methods that are widely used across the globe.

He was involved in the redesign of JBI's systematic review software [JBI SUMARI] and the JBI Systematic Review Training Program, which is attended by more than 1000 people each year.

He possessed that native curiosity, an analytical mind that was never satisfied with surface answers. Where others saw obstacles or abstract data, he saw a challenge or an opportunity waiting to be discovered. He was the person you could rely on at any moment, the one who brought clarity where there was confusion and calm where panic set in. His professional generosity knew no bounds; he never hesitated to share his knowledge, guide a colleague just starting out, or shoulder the burden of others without asking for anything in return. His work ethic and dedication set a standard of excellence that we will always strive to honor. He guided many colleagues, and the ambition with which he always sought excellence left an indelible mark, a man who knew how to cultivate genuine connections in an often demanding professional environment.

Cătălin coordinated many students and medical residents and was generous in his support for JBI Collaboration staff and others for their systematic reviews. He played an essential role in modernizing many JBI critical

appraisal tools [JBI] and was a long-standing active member of the JBI Scientific Committee. In addition, Cătălin was also a Cochrane review author, a JBI review author, and a major contributor to the Restoring Invisible and Abandoned Trials [RIAT] initiative, being involved in the critical work of restoring Study 329. These examples are just an overview of the important work Cătălin carried out throughout his career.

In 2018, Cătălin moved from Adelaide to Sydney to take up a research fellow position within the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Digital Health, at the Australian Institute of Health Innovation [AIHI] at Macquarie University. Cătălin quickly integrated into the research training program for both postdoctoral researchers and Master of Research and Doctor of Medicine [MD] students. He became legendary for his enthusiastic and detail-rich lectures on systematic review methods and the evidence synthesis process. His lecture materials will endure for many years, and a white paper on literature reviews for students and researchers, which he began alongside colleagues at AIHI, will be completed, leaving behind an important legacy.

His research interests at AIHI were vast, and he was always excited to get involved in many different projects. However, his interest quickly converged towards the use of artificial intelligence and automation technologies to support systematic reviews, a topic in which he became increasingly expert and passionate. He read avidly and led several projects, including the first attempt to replicate an automated systematic review. Cătălin's innovative ideas for AI-driven evidence synthesis were still developing when, suddenly, he could no longer work due to the acceleration of his illness.

Just a few months after joining AIHI, Cătălin received his diagnosis and spent the next few years juggling work and his increasingly aggressive treatments. He remained optimistic and full of energy throughout this period, despite

many physical challenges. After a long suffering borne with courage, Cătălin, who was devoted to his Orthodox faith, passed away at home in the presence of his wife Alina, having been discharged from the hospital the day before.

His world was one of ideas, of flipped pages, and knowledge assimilated page by page. This love for books shaped a character of rare depth; he always had an appropriate metaphor, a unique perspective drawn from a classical author, a witty joke, or a story to shed light in moments of impasse. For him, reading was not just a hobby, but a way of understanding the world, people, and himself.

Beyond the screens, articles, and accomplished goals, he was, above all, an exceptional friend. I had the joy of sharing more than just a workspace with him. We shared moments of sincerity over coffee, controversial and sometimes endless professional discussions, clashes of ideas, bursts of laughter that lightened the heaviest days of research, and long conversations about books or what the solution is, where we are headed. He had the gift of listening, of offering a helping hand, of giving advice, providing an anchor of normalcy and warmth in a demanding professional environment.

A remarkable and passionate researcher, he will be missed by all who had the privilege to know him and understand his thirst for knowledge. The type of philosophical and methodological erudition he personified is increasingly rare nowadays and will always command enormous respect in evidence-based healthcare circles.

His life was like a good book: written with intelligence, lived with passion, and turned with the modesty of an ordinary man. Even though his last chapter ended far away from us and much too early, his story and the kindness he showed us will remain forever written in the memory of our institution.