

Catalonia's medical community pays tribute to Joan Viñas, the humanist physician

The rector of the UdL highlights his legacy and dedication to serving others

"I have always tried to help others and put the talents I have been given at the service of people and society as a whole." With these words from Joan Viñas (1950–2026), the rector of the University of Lleida (UdL), Maria Àngels Balsells, recalled the man who led the UdL from 2003 to 2011.

She made these remarks during the posthumous tribute held yesterday by the [Royal Academy of Medicine of Catalonia](https://ramc.cat/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (RAMC) in recognition of his contributions to medicine and surgery, bioethics, the study and research of these disciplines, the improvement of working conditions for medical professionals and, above all, patient well-being and dignity.

Balsells described former rector Viñas as a central figure at the UdL, a great public servant and an outstanding medical professional, "which is why his impact extends so far beyond the University".

The tribute began, however, with an account of Viñas's life and career delivered by Lluís Guerrero, a full member of the Academy. In addition to mentioning the positions and responsibilities he held (rector, dean, president of the RAMC, president of the Lleida AIDS Association, among others) and the numerous distinctions he received (Creu de Sant Jordi, Josep Trueta Prize, Xarxa Vives Medal of Honour, City of Lleida Medal, University of Lleida Medal, among others), Guerrero highlighted his solidarity with the most vulnerable, not only locally —through his collaboration with Arrels, the Red Cross, AIDS organisations and others— but also in Mozambique and Chad.

The word humanist was the most frequently used to describe him throughout the event. It was used not only by Guerrero but also by the president of the Lleida Medical Association, Ramon Mur Garcés; the secretary-general of the Institute for Catalan Studies, Àngel Messeguer; and the president of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Catalonia, Miquel Vilardell. They all emphasised his humanistic approach, not only to the practice of medicine but also as a way of life, dedicating his time and knowledge to serving others until the very end.

For her part, Montserrat Esquerda, dean of Medicine at Ramon Llull University and one of those who had Viñas as a mentor, highlighted his pioneering work in the field of bioethics. He introduced bioethics into university curricula and medical practice through the creation of healthcare ethics committees, humanisation committees and clinical research ethics committees. "For him, medicine could not be separated from justice and human dignity," she stated.

Finally, the president of the RAMC closed the event by saying, "Joan Viñas leaves us with knowledge, dedication and an example to follow." May his memory continue to inspire us.

Source: UdL Press Office



