This paper describes a subtype of childhood acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL), with a distinct clinical feature distribution. E-rosette positive ALL or T-ALL, which comprises 23 percent of the ALL studied, is associated with a higher proportion of older children, predominantly boys, a mediastinal enlargement (probably a thymic mass), and an elevated initial leukocyte count, all features of poor prognosis in childhood ALL. The uncertainty lasted until the second T-ALL appeared and thereafter we defined two groups of ALL: E-rosette positive and E-rosette negative. After studying 48 consecutive ALL samples, all negative for surface immunoglobulins, we established that children with E-rosette positive blasts or T-cell leukemia had distinct clinical characteristics and poor outcomes. A few months later, G. Flandrin and coworkers reported the existence of a few cases of B-cell ALL with very poor prognoses in which tumor cells resembled the tumor cells of Burkitt's lymphoma patients. Our further studies of childhood T-ALL blasts suggested that they mimicked thymic cells more than mature T cells. This assumption was confirmed five years later by immunophenotyping with monoclonal antibodies. Since then, hundreds of publications have emerged and the immunophenotyping of ALL with monoclonal antibodies is currently a routine test used to define distinct clinical entities and prognostic factors for better management of leukemia therapy.

This was a marvelous experience for me. In 1979, back in Argentina, I received the Pablo San Martin Award sponsored by FUNDAEU (a national leukemia foundation) for my contribution to ALL research. Our work has provided a tool to increase our knowledge in T-cell ontogeny and in clinical hematology. To quote Michael J. Borowitz, our initial ALL hypothesis "is still valid today, in that it expresses the philosophy by which investigators approach analysis of prognostic factors." (p. 761) I would like to dedicate this commentary to the memory of my best teacher and good friend, Luis Borella, who shared with me all the joys of research during my four years in the US.