

International Golden Light Award Winner 2023

Walter Ivan Fiuza Guimarães Junior

BRAZIL



My name is Walter Ivan Fiuza Guimarães Junior, I'm 27 years old, and I'm a Brazilian medical doctor who graduated from Ciudad Del Este, Paraguay.

I was diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of 14; initially, it was very difficult due to the stigmas, myths, and prejudices that go beyond the illness itself. At first, the seizures were sporadic and occurred mildly during sleep. However, over the years, the seizures changed their patterns, becoming more frequent and intense, increasingly affecting my life. However, in 2018, during consultations at an epilepsy reference center, specialists were able to identify the cause of my disease through nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) and offer appropriate treatment. That moment was a turning point; the seizures significantly decreased, bringing a new perspective and quality of life for me.

My life journey with epilepsy has been transformative. Every challenge I faced shaped me into a conscious and determined professional. During my years in medical school, I witnessed the painful reality of the lack of knowledge and understanding about epilepsy in the Triple Frontier region (Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina). With that in mind, I decided to take bold actions.

I met with authorities from the three countries and decided it was time to translate complex

technical and scientific knowledge into language accessible to everyone. I dedicated myself to giving lectures at universities, and schools of all levels, and actively participated in radio and television programs. I wanted to reach as many people as possible, disseminating information about epilepsy. The hard work paid off, and I was honored with an invitation to join the prestigious Brazilian Federation of Epilepsy - EpiBrasil. Alongside epilepsy support movements and associations, I expanded my involvement even further. I had the privilege of contributing to book chapters, participating in live broadcasts and conferences related to the topic, and recently assumed the presidency of the organization.

When I started my journey as a doctor, I never imagined that one day I would have the opportunity to lead such an important organization in the fight against epilepsy. Every step I took over the years, overcoming challenges and working tirelessly, was guided by a purpose: to improve the lives of those living with this disease.

Epilepsy has been a significant part of my own story. The seizures and uncertainties I have faced since the age of 14 have shaped my determination and understanding of the importance of supporting others on this journey. In 2023, I was elected by my peers as the president of EpiBrasil and it came with great responsibility to step further on the cause of epilepsy.

Through education, awareness, and outreach, I have sought to demystify the disease and provide support to those in need. This journey continues, and it has been filled with challenges and accomplishments. It is hard to measure the impact of my actions, but nevertheless, to me, it is gratifying to believe that I am making a difference in the lives of many people.

In the future, I will continue to fight for the cause of epilepsy because I believe that everyone deserves understanding, support, and equal opportunities. My goal is to promote a more inclusive society where epilepsy is not a reason for discrimination or isolation but rather a challenge we can overcome together.

I would like to thank my friends from the Brazilian Federation of Epilepsy and the Brazilian Association of Epilepsy for indicating my name for this prestigious award.