

Diltor Vladimir Araújo Opromolla, M.D., Ph.D.

13/04/1934 - 15/12/2004

Prof. Diltor Vladimir Araújo Opromolla

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Dr. Diltor Vladimir Araújo Opromolla passed away on 12/15/2004 at the age 70. He was born in São Paulo on April 13th, 1934, and dedicated most of his life to the Instituto Lauro de Souza Lima in Bauru, former Asilo Colônia Aymorés which was inaugurated exactly a year before his birth, on April 13th, 1933. This institution was created by the government of the State of São Paulo as part of the policy of compulsory hospitalization of leprosy patients. This resulted in the creation of other asylums such as the Santo Ângelo (Mogi das Cruzes), Padre Bento (Guarulhos), Pirapitingui (Sorocaba) and Cocais (Casa Branca). There are rare examples of men who were indissolubly bound to an institution such as Dr. Diltor was. He graduated from the School of Medicine of Sorocaba (PUC-SP) in 1957 and in the following year he was already working at the Sanatório Aymorés, in Bauru. His professional and scientific trajectory was determined by some personality trait. Intelligent, knowledgeable and dedicated, recently graduated he already showed his excellent specialized training in Dermatology and medicine in general. While interacting with people, he was extremely kind, charming and spontaneous, without any presumption; he exhibited personal interest, respect and affection towards his patients. His medical training and interest for the patients allowed well-documented and accurate diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. His attitudes, associated with keen, varied and permanent scientific curiosity, led him to professional success and extensive scientific production. In the first years of his medical activities, he collaborated with Dr. Lauro de Souza Lima in studies concerning the treatment of leprosy, and from there he started the pioneering work on the



use of rifampin, which is, to date, the most effective drug in multi-drug therapy. Throughout the years, he became a well respected scientist in Brazil and abroad. His interventions were received with profound respect in any scientific meeting.

By looking at his curriculum at the CNPq website, we can see 231 published scientific papers, about 300 participations in meetings, symposia and seminars in Brazil and abroad. He advised many Master's and Ph.D. candidates as part of graduate programs in the most prestigious schools of the country, such as the Medical School of São Paulo (USP), Paulista Medical School (Unifesp) and Medical School of Botucatu (Unesp). He was chief editor of the journal *Hansenologia Internationalis* since 1989, editor of various teaching materials about leprosy and wrote several book chapters. He wrote the preface to the second edition of the Compendium *Leprosy*, by Robert C. Hastings. In the last 30 years he participated in almost every governmental leprosy program both in the State of São Paulo and Brazil. He was a member of the Steering Committee of the Therapy of Mycobacterial Diseases, president of the International Leprosy Association for Latin America, chairman of the Chemotherapy section in the International Leprosy Meeting in Orlando (USA) in 1993, being an official guest of the American Leprosy Mission in all international meetings on leprosy. This special, professional history, albeit summarized and incomplete, is just a byproduct of his main activity, namely, to make efforts to turn an almost shutdown asylum into a Dermatology hospital, research institute and reference center for leprosy in Brazil and Portuguese-speaking countries. In order to do that, he took

advantage of his working capacity, thorough knowledge in all areas related to leprosy, scientific prestige and power of persuasion over those chosen to be his collaborators. In the area of rehabilitation of neurological deficits, he started with a simple room for prevention and treatment of foot ulcers and evolved to a complete rehabilitation service, with surgery, physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychology, prosthetics and shoes workshops, activities that spread out. He was an efficient collaborator and advisor in the Disabled Rehabilitation and Reintegration Society (Sorri). He started a residency program in dermatology, accredited by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Brazilian Dermatology Society. From a few shelves with old books, he developed the Institute's library, which later on incorporated that of the Health Institute - Luiza Keffer Library, specialized in leprosy and currently the largest in Brazil. From the leftovers of the decaying *Revista Brasileira de Leprologia*, he created, inspired by Professor Abrão Rothberg, the journal *Hansenologia Internationalis*, that has been continuously published for almost 30 years. Similar trajectories were followed in the crea-

tion of other services, such as that of Ophtalmology, laboratories of Microbiology, Immunology and Mycobacteria, the latter specialized in drug resistance testing for leprosy. Finally, an important achievement was the consolidation of the Lauro de Souza Lima Institute as a Research Institute Department of Health of the State of São Paulo.

It is necessary to have been closely involved with the Asylum Aymorés to adequately value Dr. Diltor Opromolla's work. Even facing disbelief, immobility, indifference, he always believed. He fought every day of his life and in his last year, compulsorily retired, he underwent a risky surgery and straining adjuvant treatment, but he kept on working as if nothing had happened. In his last 15 days he went to the State of Acre to continue his successful work on Jorge Lobo's disease, and to the Ministry of Health, where he was honored for his life dedication to leprosy. In the weekend before his death, he participated in scientific meetings in São Paulo and Araraquara, having worked with enthusiasm until his very last moment. □

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