



Obituary/Necrológio

Antônia Ivoneida Aragão

(★ 1956 †2012)

Antônia Ivoneida Aragão was born on November 1, 1956, in Santa Quitéria, in the backlands of Ceará, Brazil - where she wished to be buried.

She graduated in Pharmacy from Federal University of Ceará (UFCE - *Universidade Federal do Ceará*) in 1982. She specialized in Clinical Biochemistry (1985), Blood and Tissue Protozoa (1986), and Epidemiology and Health Surveillance (2005). In 2009, she obtained her master's degree in Public Health, and the subject of her study - and her great passion - was the Plague.

In 1985, she joined the Superintendent of Public Health Campaigns (SUCAM - *Superintendência de Campanhas de Saúde Pública*) in Ceará, primarily developing field interventions for the Plague Control Program (PCP - *Programa de Controle da Peste*), and the diagnosis of plague and Kala-azar. In 1991, she assumed the supervision of field activities of the PCP in the State of Ceará, once incorporated into the National Health Foundation (FUNASA - *Fundação Nacional de Saúde*). With the decentralization of endemic disease control, she was transferred to the Department of Health in the State of Ceará, where she was initially placed in the Vector Borne Infectious Disease Division (CETRAV - *Célula de Doenças Transmissíveis por Vetores*). Thereafter, she remained in the management of the PCP and became responsible for monitoring the blood cholinesterase of field workers. During this period, she was devoted to an essential activity of the Unified Health System (SUS - *Sistema Único de Saúde*): the training of staff - specifically, prioritizing biosafety, field activities, and the clinical and laboratory handling of the plague.

Her most relevant papers, which were mainly published in the journal of the Brazilian Society for Tropical Medicine (SBMT - *Sociedade Brasileira de Medicina Tropical*), reported the history and surveillance of the plague in Ceará and the prevalence of anti-*Yersinia pestis* antibodies in rodents and domestic animals.

Her almost 30 years of work in the public sector were marked by joy, dedication, generosity, enthusiasm, respect, perseverance, and competence, which earned her admiration and respect from superiors and subordinates. She worked relentlessly but always with pleasure, even on occasions when she traveled to the plague foci, during which she always found time for shopping, memorable walks, and unforgettable waterfall baths.

Unceasingly passionate and excited about research and work on the plague, she attended the meetings of our SBMT, consistently



accompanied by her friends from Ceará and Pernambuco (mainly members of the FIOCRUZ - PE), with whom she developed a productive line of work.

Ivoneida leaves a remarkable legacy: her relentless fight for control of a disease neglected by technicians and health administrators. In recent years, she earnestly devoted herself to ensure the presence of trained professionals at all levels of the program in order to continue the work on plague control in Ceará. She was not resigned to the difficulties she encountered in the development of the PCP, and her capabilities were the best strategy to influence field staff toward the program. She succeeded in providing structure and maintaining the laboratories in the focal areas, and her collaboration in the work of undergraduate and postgraduate students was remarkable.

Ivoneida leaves a huge void in the field of plague research in Brazil, and her early death after several years of fighting cancer - which she fought bravely - is cause for sadness. We can say conclusively that we lost a great friend and a tenacious fighter for her ideals and life, and we can only be thankful for the privilege of her companionship.

**Luciano Pamplona de Góes Cavalcanti^{1,2}
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