

OBITUARY

Dr. José Gay Prieto

1905–1979



I had the great opportunity of having been side by side, not only in Madrid but in travels around Spain and through many countries with the wise Professor, who because of his outstanding merits received the most important honors

in the field of dermatology.

I met José Gay for the first time when we both were medical students at San Carlos College in Madrid. At that time, he was a very outstanding student not only because of his own intelligence but also because of his efficiency and his fluency of speech. It was easy to guess that he would become a very good professor.

We worked together as young residents in dermatology, he under the guidance of Prof. Bejarano and I under Dr. Bertoloty. We both successfully passed the exams to become official dermatologists of the State.

In 1933, José Gay, after brilliant exams, was appointed as Professor and Chairman at Granada University. Being less than 30 years old, he was the youngest full professor of medicine in Spain. It was in the same department, in 1880, that the Chairman had been Prof. Benito Hernando, Hansen's co-worker in the discovery of the leprosy bacillus. Perhaps this coincidence had an important influence on the great interest Gay had in leprosy after that.

Later on he was appointed as the Chairman of the Dermatology Department of Madrid University. There, as well as in his service at San Juan de Dios Hospital, he developed his wonderful clinical, teaching, and research work. His two most outstanding books, *Dermatología* and *Treponematosi y Enfermedades Venereas*, have been the textbooks of several generations of

medical students in Spain and in other countries.

José Gay's merits as a dermatologist have been recognized all over the world, having been nominated as an honorary member of almost all dermatology societies. As president of the Spanish Academy of Dermatology, as a member of the Spanish Royal Academy of Medicine, and in all the appointments he had in his scientific and academic life, he was a tireless worker.

From the beginning of his medical activities, José Gay was especially interested in leprosy. We both were committed by the Spanish government to organize the leprosy campaign in our country, and together we organized the well known leprosy courses at Fontilles Hospital. Working side by side with him, I was able to realize that he was not only interested in the scientific aspects of leprosy but also in the human and social problems of patients.

In 1957, Professor Gay was asked by WHO to organize and conduct the world leprosy campaign. He emphasized the importance of early diagnosis, ambulatory treatment, and rehabilitation in the management of leprosy.

Dermatology has lost one of its outstanding professors. Leprology and leprologists have lost a great worker in our field and a great friend. I am sure that God will reward him for his great work in favor of humankind.

—Felix Contreras Duenas

It is with deep regret that we have learned about the death of our colleague and friend, Professor Dr. José Gay Prieto.

Dr. Gay was the first Chief of the WHO Leprosy Unit from 1959 to 1961. Much credit must be given to Dr. Gay not only for his vast knowledge as a clinician and leprologist but also for his remarkable capacity and untiring activities. We know of hardly any important leprosy endemic area

in the world which was not visited by Dr. Gay and that at a time when travelling was much more difficult than it is now. His passionate support for leprosy patients created much goodwill in many government offices and opened doors for the commencement of numerous leprosy control programs.

Gay Prieto more than earned his place in the history of worldwide leprosy control. Many of the ongoing programs were cre-

ated, either directly or indirectly, as a result of the effect on government officials of Gay Prieto's enthusiasm and tenacity.

With the loss of Gay Prieto, we are losing a personal friend, and we shall never forget his humor and the very humane and personal approach he extended to all he met, leprosy patients and colleagues alike.

—H. Sansarricq

—J. Walter