

José N. Rodríguez, M.D., M.P.H.

1896–1980



The International Leprosy Association, the Leonard Wood Memorial, and indeed the whole leprosy world will be saddened by the death of Dr. José N. Rodríguez, dean of Philippine leprologists, on 27 February 1980.

Dr. Rodríguez' life was devoted to leprosy work and research. Two years after graduation from the U.P. College of Medicine in 1920, he became Chief Physician of the Culion Leper Colony. Increasingly responsible positions in the Philippine Leprosy Service followed (Chief, Eversley Childs Treatment Station; General Supervisor, Leprosy Treatment Stations; Chief Leprologist and Researcher; Chief, Division of Sanitaria), and he was Director of the Bureau of Disease Control when he retired from government service in 1961 at the age of 65 years.

Dr. Rodríguez took charge of leprosy control in the Philippines during much of his 41 years in government service. As early as 1930, he established the Eversley Childs Sanitarium in Cebu and other regional leprosaria and organized mobile and stationary skin clinics as important agencies for case-finding and case-holding. In later years he worked vigorously for an increasing liberalization of existing leprosy segregation laws and was instrumental in the passage of Republic Act 4073 in 1963, which finally abolished compulsory segregation in the Philippines.

His long and close association with the Leonard Wood Memorial, which lasted until shortly before his death, dated back to the early 1920s when he met Dr. H. W. Wade in Culion. Aside from his own research on the natural course of the various clinical types of leprosy, Dr. Rodríguez collaborated for many years with Dr. Wade in a series of influential clinico-pathological

studies which contributed materially to present-day knowledge of tuberculoid and borderline leprosy. Preliminary surveys by Dr. Rodríguez laid the groundwork for the Memorial's long series of epidemiological studies of leprosy in the Philippines. These studies, initiated in 1933 by Dr. J. A. Doull in association with Dr. Rodríguez, stand as something of a landmark in epidemiological investigations in the field of leprosy. Dr. Rodríguez also participated actively in the Memorial's long series of clinical evaluation studies on the clinical efficacy of new drugs in lepromatous leprosy, which was started in 1952 under Dr. Doull's supervision. His lifelong interest in leprosy continued long after most people would have shown signs of senility. He remained an active consultant and adviser to the Department of Health and the Leonard Wood Memorial almost until the day he died at the age of 84 years.

Dr. Rodríguez was among the 22 world-famous leprologists who attended the memorable Leonard Wood Memorial Conference held in Manila in 1931, during which measures were taken for the immediate creation of the International Leprosy Association (ILA) and publication of the *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY*. He was continuously a Councillor of the ILA since 1933, Vice-President since 1968, and was made Honorary Vice-President in 1979. He was Philippine delegate to almost all of the International Leprosy Congresses, and only illness prevented him from attending the XI Congress in Mexico City.

Dr. Rodríguez' publications include more than 100 papers on leprosy. During his lifetime he held many posts of distinction and received numerous awards and honors. He represented the Philippines at several World Health Assemblies in Geneva. He was twice a member of the WHO Expert Committee on Leprosy and served as WHO Consultant (leprosy) in various foreign countries. He was included in the roster of "Senior Distinguished Contributors" in the Centennial Festschrift of the ILA. His long and distinguished career is aptly summa-

rized in the Damien-Dutton Award which he received in 1974, which cites Dr. Rodriguez as "an outstanding scientist, teacher and administrator who, in a lifetime devoted to the leprosy problem of the world, made major scientific advances in its diag-

nosis, treatment, epidemiology and control." He will long be remembered with esteem and affection by his many colleagues and friends.

—Ricardo S. Guinto