

OBITUARY

Casimiro B. Lara, M.D.

1896–1981



Dr. Casimiro B. Lara was born on 4 March 1896 in Magsingal, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. While attending elementary school, he received private tutoring in Spanish, Latin, and Religion.

He obtained his medical degree from the College of Medicine, University of the Philippines, in 1919, after which he joined the Philippine General Hospital as Resident Physician and the Department of Medicine, College of Medicine, University of the Philippines, as Assistant in Medicine (1919–1922). He was granted a fellowship at the Mayo Foundation, University of Minnesota, U.S.A., where he spent two years (1924–1926) in experimental work and wrote six papers on the pharmacology of chaulmoogra derivatives (unpublished). He was appointed Supervising Physician, Culion Leper Colony in 1922, promoted to Chief Physician in 1924 and became Chief of the Colony in 1947, a position he held until his retirement from government service in 1962. He was reappointed Consultant Leprologist (without compensation) on 27 December 1962 to continue his research work on leprosy in children up to the last moment of his life.

During all these years, Dr. Lara selflessly devoted his life to leprosy work with the zeal of a missionary. His deep and solicitous concern for the leprosy patients has earned for him their profound admiration, respect, and love. Even after retirement, he stayed in Culion, continuing his research on the children born of leprosy parents—an original, extensive and intensive, painstaking study of the evolution, progress and prophylaxis of leprosy in children. He authored some 50 papers and edited seven ed-

itorials or symposia on various medical subjects—most are on leprosy—published in various local and foreign medical journals.

In 1964 Dr. Lara was first appointed as a member of the Leprosy Expert Advisory Panel of the World Health Organization (WHO) to serve for five years. He was reappointed in the same capacity three times, to serve for two years each time. In 1966 he carried out a study on D.D.S. chemoprophylaxis among contacts, still apparently non-leprosy, children in Culion. This work was aided by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta under the recommendation of the WHO.

Dr. Lara was the recipient of several awards and citations including: Orden de Merito Dr. Carlos Finlay, Grado Oficial from the Cuban Government (1948); Outstanding Physician for Contribution to Leprology by the Manila Medical Society (1953); Most Outstanding Physician of Culion by the Philippine Medical Association (1965); Bronze Thanks Badge Citation from the National Council, Boy Scouts of the Philippines (1954). In 1968 he received from the President of the Republic of the Philippines the Presidential Award of Merit (Medal and Plaque) in recognition of his outstanding achievements in leprosy work. In the same year, he was also honored by the University of the Philippines Medical Alumni Society as Most Distinguished Alumnus and by the U.P. Alumni Association with a certificate of Distinguished Alumnus.

Dr. Casimiro B. Lara died on 25 July 1981 at the age of 85. He will long be remembered as an outstanding scientist in leprosy, an exemplary devoted physician loved by all patients and respected by his colleagues, a true and exceptional public servant whose footsteps may well serve as a beckoning light to inspire and guide all generations of the Filipino Nation.

—Fernando A. José, Jr., M.D.