

OBITUARIES

Ayele Belehu, B.S., M.Sc., Ph.D.
1943–1983



Ayele Belehu, Director of the Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, died unexpectedly in an acute asthmatic attack on 17 May 1983.

Ayele was born in Debre Sina, Shoa Region, Ethiopia, on 8 December 1943. After completing traditional education and subsequently elementary and secondary school in Addis Ababa, he joined Addis Ababa University and took his B.S. in biology in 1966. He then worked for one year as a graduate assistant in the Chemistry Department. From 1967 to 1970 Ayele studied microbiology at Boston University and the University of Arizona, Tucson, U.S.A. and obtained an M.Sc. degree. After two years of lecturing in the Department of Biology at Addis Ababa University, he left for London to study pathology and immunology in the Department of Pathology at the Royal College of Surgeons, University of London, from 1972 to 1975. He studied under Prof. John Turk and produced a thesis for his Ph.D. entitled "The immunology and pathology of *Leishmania enriettii* infection in rodents and its modification by cyclophosphamide and malaria."

Returning to Addis Ababa, he joined AHRI as a senior researcher and from 1977 until his untimely death he served as Director of the Institute. In addition to his directorship, he conducted investigations in the immunology of leishmaniasis and leprosy, resulting in more than 30 scientific publications. Ayele was also an honorary assistant professor in the Faculty of Medicine, Addis Ababa University, and gave lectures at the Department of Biology and supervised M.Sc. students. He was a board

member of the *Ethiopian Medical Journal*; the Advisory Board of Central Laboratory and Research Institute; the Advisory Board of Sinet, an Ethiopian Journal of Science; the Cheshire Home for the disabled in Addis Ababa, and the All-Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre (ALERT). For many years Dr. Ayele was a member of the Steering Committee of IMMLEP, a component of the UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases.

Ayele was a most competent and dynamic scientist and leader. His friendly and interested attitude facilitated the cooperation, necessary for an institute like AHRI, with national and international organizations. He was a gentle and kind person to whom you could go with personal matters for help. His interests in his fellow men were closely associated with his deep religious attachment to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Ayele's research in the immunology of leprosy and leishmaniasis has been of major importance for our knowledge in these fields and his contributions on the different boards, especially the Steering Committee of IMMLEP, has further augmented these contributions. In 1983 he was awarded the Redd Barna Prize of Honour, the Norwegian Save the Children Organization's highest mark of respect, for his long-standing contributions in the field of leprosy research. His untimely death when he had reached a state of scientific maturity that would have allowed him to contribute even more has cut short a brilliant career.

Ayele is greatly and deeply missed by his family; his friends in Ethiopia and abroad; colleagues in AHRI, ALERT, the University of Addis Ababa, and by his country, who has lost its first immunologist.

—Abebe Haregewoin
—Per Olcen