

OBITUARY

Ma Haide (George Hatem)
1910–1988



It is very sad to announce that our respected Dr. Ma Haide (George Hatem) passed away on 3 October 1988 in the PUMC Hospital, Beijing.

Dr. Ma Haide was born in September 1910 in New York, U.S.A. He completed his clinical studies at the University of Geneva, and graduated with an M.D. degree in 1933. He then came to China to study tropical diseases for one year. He found his vocation in working for the health of the Chinese people. He became a Chinese citizen in 1950.

Dr. Ma dedicated his whole life to the medical and health services of the Chinese people, and made distinguished contributions. During the Anti-Japanese War, he served in various medical capacities, including medicine, surgery, public health, teaching, and in an advisory capacity to the medical services of the army. He showed the spirit of great internationalism.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, he was Advisor to the Ministry of Public Health, and it was at this time that Dr. Ma devoted his energy to the elimination of venereal diseases and the control of leprosy in China. Venereal diseases were eventually eliminated in 1964. Since then, his main effort was spent on leprosy control work. As head of the Leprosy Research Department of the Institute of Dermatology, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, he conducted a series of leprosy research works including epidemiology, therapeutics, the social aspects and rehabilitation, as well as laboratory studies together with his many colleagues who were interested in this work and working under his guidance. He undertook field surveys all over China where leprosy was prevalent. He was and still is very much respected by leprosy sufferers and leprosy workers in China. He stressed the

importance of training leprosy personnel and propagated scientific knowledge of leprosy among the public so that the unnecessary fear of leprosy might be diminished. Under his strong influence for a number of years, a three-tiered leprosy network was set up in the leprosy-endemic areas. Thus, a solid foundation was laid for the control of leprosy at the grass roots level. As a result, great achievements were obtained in our antileprosy work, and the prevalence and incidence of leprosy have dropped considerably year by year and the scope of its prevalence narrowed down steadily.

In 1981, the Ministry of Public Health convened the National Leprosy Conference where a decision was made to basically eradicate leprosy before the end of this century. Implementation of the multidrug therapy (MDT) recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) was unanimously agreed to be carried out in the whole country. Dr. Ma Haide worked hard to solicit worldwide collaboration, and contributions from WHO and many other leprosy associations/foundations abroad in terms of drugs, equipment and transportation facilities were forthcoming. Ever since, significant results were achieved as a result of the nationwide implementation of MDT.

Dr. Ma was the chief editor of "Handbook of Multidrug Therapy" and the "Leprosy Control Manual," and had written several important articles on the strategy of leprosy control which are very valuable directions in guiding the antileprosy work in China. In 1985, he was elected President of the China Leprosy Association/Foundation and Director of the China Leprosy Center. He was also the editor-in-chief of the *Chinese Leprosy Journal*.

For his prominent work in leprosy control, he was honored with the 1982 Damien-Dutton Award. In 1988, he received the International Gandhi Award for Leprosy in India. In September of the same year, the Ministry of Public Health of the People's Republic of China gave him the honor of

naming him "The Forerunner of Health Services in New China."

The passing of Dr. Ma Haide is a great loss to the health services, especially leprosy control, in China. His noble character has set an example for us all, the medical work-

ers, to follow. We will realize his unfulfilled wish of the basic elimination of leprosy from China before the end of this century.

—Prof. Ye Gan-yun
Vice President and Secretary General
China Leprosy Association