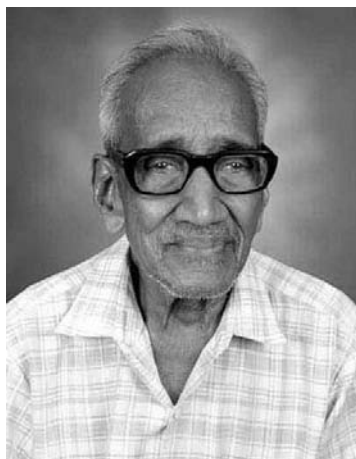


DR. GOPAL RAMU

1924–2003



Dr. Gopal Ramu, the well known leprologist from India, passed away on 25 July 2003, at the age of 79.

Dr. Ramu was born in Kerala and had his early medical education at Indore. His initial career started in the state of Holkar. Even while working in general medicine, he showed a keen interest in leprosy. He pursued his leprosy interest both in the field and in the clinic when he started working at Rewa (M.P.). It was at this time that he was involved in research on lathyrism under the Indian Council of Medical Research. His association with Dr. C. G. S. Iyer during the lathyrism research enabled him to look for a better place to pursue his interest in leprosy, and to join the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute, Chengalpattu.

Dr. Ramu was greatly instrumental in building up the clinical research at two major leprosy institutions in India, the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute (CLTRI), Chengalpattu (Tamilnadu) from 1962–1976, and the Central JALMA Institute for Leprosy Research (CJIL), Agra from 1976–1986. Besides these two major institutions, Dr. Ramu made significant contributions to leprosy research in his earlier days at Rewa and in his post-retirement days at Kumbakonam and Coimbatore (Tamilnadu).

Dr. Ramu was an outstanding expert on all aspects of clinical leprosy and blended his keen observational instincts with good science. Together with the veteran leprologist Dr. K. Ramanujam and with the support of Dr. C. G. S. Iyer and Dr. K. V. Desikan, he studied several aspects of the clinical manifestations of leprosy and its complications. Thus, the 1960's saw some important contributions in leprosy from him through this group. He was also instrumental in developing a rational method for scoring of clinical lesions in leprosy which greatly facilitated the follow-up of patients during clinical trials.

When Dr. Ramu moved to CJIL at Agra in 1986, he saw an opportunity not only to build good clinical services but also to exploit important research opportunities that had become available by then through developments in the serology of leprosy. This work very much complimented his earlier interest in lepromin reaction among patients and contacts.

Of his several accomplishments, one of the most important was his ability to motivate young workers who came in contact with him. The environment and encouragement provided by him resulted in several individuals joining in leprosy research. Wherever he was, he set a good example of diligence and perseverance.

As an individual, Dr. Ramu was greatly liked by everyone who interacted with him. He was most helpful and generous, both to his associates and patients. Deeply interested in music and religion, he spent the last part of his days with his daughter at Coimbatore (Tamilnadu) continuing to provide advice on leprosy research.

The 1960's saw a great deal of resurgence in leprosy research in India and Dr. Ramu came onto the scene at the right time and made a great impact in better understanding the disease and its management. His memory will be cherished for a long time both by his fellow workers and patients.

—Dr. S. K. Nordeen