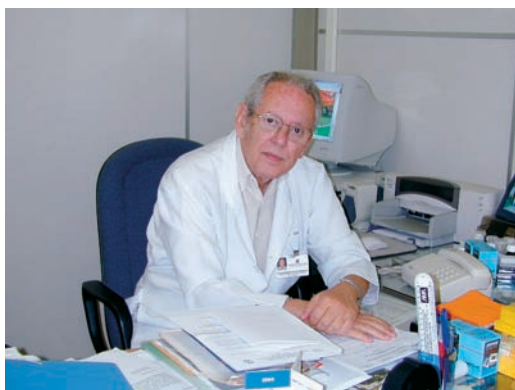


OBITUARY

DILTOR VLADMIR ARAUJO OPROMOLLA

1934–2004



Prof. Diltor V. A. Opromolla passed away last December, 2004 at age 70. He studied medicine at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo where he graduated in 1957, and took his Ph.D. in dermatology in 1973 at the University of São Paulo (USP). Soon after, he started his studies on leprosy at the State Department of Leprosy Prophylaxis where he met two other important names in Brazilian leprology, Dr. Abraham Rotberg and Luiz Marino Bechelli. In 1958, Prof. Opromolla moved to Bauru where he joined government health services as a leprologist in the local leprosarium, which later became the Instituto Lauro de Souza Lima. He soon started to approach patients with a wide view, including, at that time, prevention of disabilities. Apart from the standard treatment, Prof. Opromolla had a particular concern for disabilities, and he inaugurated a special clinic named “The Healthy Foot Room” where patients could have full examination of feet, treatment of foot ulcers and talks on prevention of ulcers and self-care. It was a tremendous success and the “room” was further expanded in the late 1970s with the visit of Prof. Arvello, from Venezuela, who was introducing the concept of prevention of disabilities by simple techniques in the Americas. The visit of Dr. Arvello and the commitment of Prof. Opromolla was the beginning of a deep

modification in the institution and how it regards P.O.D. and rehabilitation for leprosy-affected persons. In the clinical side, Prof. Opromolla was introducing new drug treatments and led the studies on the use of rifampicin in the treatment of leprosy. At that period, compulsory internation was discontinued in Brazil and the old leprosarium was becoming an unstable institution. One of the outstanding contributions of Prof. Opromolla was to make a clear diagnosis of this situation and to lead a group of doctors and scientist to transform the old leprosarium of Bauru in to a modern and solid research and training institution. He succeeded in this regard. Today Instituto Lauro de Souza Lima is a leading institution in leprosy in Brazil and is acknowledged in the international community. The scientific production and the massive number of trainees each year earned the Institute the position of Leprosy National Referral Center for the Ministry of Health and for the World Health Organization—and this is a concrete result of the continuous and dedicated work of Prof. Opromolla and his abilities to gather people of different areas to form a real multidisciplinary institution to serve leprosy-affected persons. He served also as consultant leprologist for the Ministry of Health and was a leading member of the W.H.O. Leprosy Expert Committee for several years. Prof. Opromolla took as his responsibility the renovation and up-dating of *Hansenologia Internationalis*, the only regular leprosy periodical published in the Americas, serving as editor from 1989 until his death. He fought hard to improve the quality of the published articles, to produce bilingual issues and to obtain funds to publish and distribute the journal. His personal scientific production was remarkable, with more than 200 articles published and several chapters in books, apart from his own book on clinical leprosy. One of his personal prides in this field was the invitation to write the preface to the 2nd edition of Hastings’ *Leprosy*.

In April 2004, he was compulsorily retired as he reached 70 years of age, but he kept the same routine at the Institute, participating in the clinical rounds, lecturing, and actively attending scientific meetings. Although fragile due to the illness that took him, he continued to accept engagements on behalf of leprosy and leprosy-affected persons. A few days before his death he was visiting Rio Branco, in the State of Acre, to discuss further research on Lobos's Disease. It was also opportune that, just one month before his death, the Ministry of

Health awarded him one of the top prizes in the field of public health in Brazil.

One week after his death, a ceremony was held in the Saint Judas Thadeu Church in Bauru, which was packed with those who had known or worked with Prof. Opromolla. It was an opportunity to remember again past experiences. It was also a moving occasion and a celebration of his work and life in the cause of science and the leprosy-affected person.

—Marcos Virmond, M.D., Ph.D.