

ERNANI AGRICOLA  
1887–1978

The world of leprosy has lost one of its best-known and best-loved workers in Dr Ernani Agricola, who died on 14 July 1978 in his ninety-first year.

He was early attracted to leprosy; in fact, the thesis he submitted for his doctorate degree in 1920 concerned the value of lymphatic node puncture in leprosy. His first medical appointments took him away from his Brazilian Alma Mater in Bela Horizonte, out into the vast rural areas in the State of Minas Gerais. His interest in leprosy was stimulated by these wide contacts with the problems of rural health, sanitation and prophylaxis, preparing him in many ways for what was to become his life-work — the investigation and control of leprosy. With undiminished interest in all matters of public health, including malaria, Dr Agricola became in 1931 General Director of Health in the State of Minas Gerais, and in 1941 he was appointed Director of the National Leprosy Service, a position he held for 13 fruitful years. It was during this time that Dr Agricola became a familiar figure on the international leprosy scene, attending the Congresses in Havana, Madrid, Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro, and representing his motherland, Brazil, at many important international gatherings. His profound local experience of leprosy in Brazil and his zeal in enlisting the active sympathy of medical teachers, social workers and politicians, added weight to his public announcements and professional contributions.

He was honoured by numerous bodies, in South America and elsewhere, and was held in high esteem wherever leprosy was taught or studied. He travelled widely, both to extend his own knowledge of leprosy and to give of his advice — terse and always very practical.

He was a member of the International Leprosy Association since 1938, a valued Councillor, Vice-President (1963–1968), and an Honorary Vice-President from 1968 until the time of his death.

We honour the memory of a great Brazilian leprologist, and extend our sympathy to his sorrowing family.

S. G. BROWNE