

Obituary

Dr A B A KARAT

F.R.C.P. London, F.R.C.P. Edinburgh, B.Sc. Madras

Medical research and leprosy research in particular have suffered a serious loss in the untimely death on 14 March 1982 of Dr Karat, an outstanding Indian leprologist. A brilliant student at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, Dr Karat qualified at Madras in 1959, and after postgraduate study in Britain with Sakuntala, his doctor wife, he returned to India in 1963 with the M.R.C.P. of both London and Edinburgh, to be joined by Mrs Karat who had been awarded the F.R.C.S. Such a partnership was ideally suited to the problems of leprosy, and in 1963 they accepted the posts of Head of Medicine and Surgery respectively at the Schieffelin Leprosy Research and Training Centre, Karigiri, South India.

The following 8 years were made remarkable by the breadth of Dr Karat's research interests; his energy, his keen and penetrating insight, his clarity of thought and the skill which he brought to bear on a range of leprosy problems.

The intensive study of leprosy in Gudyatham Taluk yielded a series of scientific papers on epidemiological subjects, made especially precious by the contributions of Dr (Mrs) Karat on surgical aspects. At the base hospital he demonstrated conclusively that it is possible to maintain experimental mouse populations in Indian conditions, and numerous and valuable bacteriological, pathological, and therapeutic studies on new leprosy drugs were the result.

In 1971 Dr and Mrs Karat moved to Bangalore, where he became Honorary Professor of Medicine at the University, and continued his leprosy research. Later he became a consultant physician in the United Kingdom. In addition to his work on leprosy, he also undertook research on diabetes, hypertension and acute and chronic renal failure. He was a member of the WHO Expert Leprosy Panel.

Dr Karat's contributions in many scientific journals are a lasting record to the memory of a great scientist and leprologist, but his memory is also precious in the minds and hearts of his many friends and students, who will never forget his devotion to his patients, his unfailing kindness and generosity to his colleagues, his capacity to inspire others to care for sufferers from leprosy, and the courage and faith with which he faced his last illness. All who had the privilege of knowing him join to offer Mrs Karat and his family their heart-felt sympathy.

T F DAVEY