

Obituary

AYELE BELEHU BS, MSc, PhD
1943–1983

Ayele Belehu, Director of the Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia died unexpectedly in an acute asthmatic attack on 17 May 1983.

Ayele was born in Debre Sina, Shoa Region, Ethiopia on 8 December 1943. After completing traditional education and subsequently elementary and secondary school in Addis Ababa he joined Addis Ababa University and took his BS in biology in 1966. He then worked for 1 year as a graduate assistant in the Chemistry Department. During 1967 to 1970 Ayele studied microbiology at Boston University College and the University of Arizona, Tucson, USA and obtained an MSc degree. After 2 years of lecturing in the Department of Biology, Addis Ababa University, he left for London to study pathology and immunology in the Department of Pathology at the Royal College of Surgeons, University of London from 1972 to 1975. He studied under Professor John Turk and produced a thesis for his PhD entitled 'The immunology and pathology of *Leishmania enriettii* infection in rodents and its modification by cyclophosphamide and malaria'.

Returning to Addis Ababa he joined AHRI as a senior researcher and from 1977 until his untimely death he served as the Director of the Institute. In addition to his directorship he conducted investigations in the immunology of Leishmaniasis and leprosy, resulting in more than 30 scientific publications. Ayele was also an honorary assistant professor in the Faculty of Medicine, Addis Ababa University, gave lectures at the Department of Biology and supervised MSc students. He was a board member of the *Ethiopian Medical Journal*, the Advisory Board of Central Laboratory and Research Institute, the Advisory Board of Sinet, the *Ethiopian Journal of Science*, the Cheshire Home for the disabled in Addis Ababa, the All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre (ALERT). For many years Dr Ayele was a member of the Steering Committee of IMMLEP, a component of the UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases.

Ayele was a most competent and dynamic scientist and leader. His friendly and interested attitude facilitated the cooperation, necessary for an Institute like AHRI, with national and international organizations. He was a gentle and kind person whom you could go to with personal matters. His interest in his fellow men was closely associated with his deep religious attachment to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Ayele's research in the immunology of leprosy and Leishmaniasis has been of major importance for our knowledge in these fields and his contributions in the different boards, especially the Steering Committee of IMMLEP, has further augmented these contributions. In 1983 he was awarded the Redd Barna Prize of Honour, the Norwegian Save the Children Organization's highest mark of respect, for his long-standing contributions in the field of leprosy research. However, his untimely death when he had reached a state of scientific maturity that would have allowed him to contribute even more has cut short a brilliant career.

Ayele is greatly and deeply missed by his family, his friends in Ethiopia and abroad, colleagues in AHRI, ALERT, the University of Addis Ababa and by his country who lost its first immunologist.

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P OLCÉN