

## Obituaries

### **DR DHARMENDRA 1900–91**

Dr Dharmendra, the most senior Indian leprologist, who was very well known throughout the world as an eminent scientist died peacefully on 10 March 1991, aged 91. He carried to his credit 60 years of continuous work in leprosy, during which he played a prominent role in shaping the leprosy programmes in India.

Dr Dharmendra was born on 1 February 1900 in Lahore. He took a medicine degree in 1928, and subsequently a Diploma in Bacteriology at London University. He did most of his research work at the school of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta, where he worked with Dr Ernest Muir. He joined the Institute as a junior scientist in 1928 and gradually rose to the position of Head of Department, working there till 1955. It was during this period that he carried out his famous work of preparing purified lepromin, which is now called Dharmendra lepromin. Most-widely used in India and other countries. Dharmendra lepromin produces both early and late reactions in skin testing. As a proponent of Indian classification of leprosy, Dr Dharmendra strongly defended and advocated it at all international congresses.

Dr Dharmendra held several important positions in India. When the National Leprosy Control Programme was planned in 1955 Dr Dharmendra was chosen as its first Director, and he laid the foundation for the control work, which has now grown to a mammoth size. When the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Centre was started, Dr Dharmendra was appointed as its first Director in 1957. He built up the Institution from scratch to an internationally recognized centre. He served there until his retirement in 1966. Subsequently he continued his work there as an Emeritus Scientist with the Indian Council of Medical Research.

The name of Dr Dharmendra has been closely linked with the *Indian Journal of Leprosy* from the time of its inception. He was the Editor of the Journal for almost 40 years with a few short breaks; and even during these breaks he maintained a close link with the Journal. Finally with the October 1989 issue of the Journal he retired at 90 years of age; only because he was physically unable to carry on any longer. The Journal was indeed Dr Dharmendra's 'baby' which he had carefully nurtured from 1938. Dr Dharmendra was also the author of a textbook on leprosy, and several small booklets, pamphlets and health education material.

In appreciation of his work, Dr Dharmendra received several honours including the title 'Padmashree' from the Government of India, the Damien-Dutton Award and the International Gandhi Award. Dr Dharmendra has left an indelible mark on the history of Indian leprology.

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