



Obituary/Necrológio

Almério de Castro Gomes

(★ 1942 †2012)

On April 14, 2012, the Brazilian scientific community lost Almério de Castro Gomes, entomologist and professor of the School of Public Health (*Faculdade de Saúde Pública*) of the University of São Paulo, and a leading authority on the entomology of leishmaniasis and dengue.

Almério was born in the City of Amarante, in the State of Piauí, on January 5, 1942. He undertook his primary and secondary studies in Piauí, and then moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he studied Pharmacy-Biochemistry at the federal university. He graduated in 1969 and thereafter moved to Londrina in the State of Paraná, where he began his career as a teacher. At the beginning of the 70s, he moved to São Paulo to attend the Public Health School of the University of São Paulo, where he received degrees in Epidemiological Entomology in 1972 and Public Health in 1975.

During that period, he joined the medical entomology team at the School of Public Health, then led by the experienced Prof. Oswaldo Paulo Forattini, under whose guidance Almério developed his academic career in this institution. He defended his master's dissertation in Public Health in 1975, becoming a faculty member in 1977, and presented his doctoral thesis in 1979. He obtained the title of *livre docente* in 1985, and became a full professor in 1992, still in the School of Public Health.

His research on the flebotomines and the epidemiology of leishmaniasis, begun in 1974 while he was still in Londrina, later expanded into countless studies in the Ribeira river valley in the State of São Paulo. In the 70s and 80s he drew attention to and characterized the vectorial role of *Nyssomyia intermedia* S. lat. (then known as *Psychodopygus intermedius*) in American cutaneous leishmaniasis (ACL). These studies demonstrated that this species was adapted to ecotones between forests and the open areas of the peridomestic environment. Almério also investigated the vectors of American visceral leishmaniasis (AVL), and when *Lutzomyia longipalpis* spread in the State of São Paulo, his research, which sought to understand the behavior of the species, contributed greatly to the knowledge of this vector.

His articles on various aspects of the epidemiology and control of leishmaniasis were and remain important resources for his students and others.

During the 90s, he collaborated with the Health Secretariat of the State of São Paulo and the Brazilian Health Ministry on an epidemiological enquiry into leishmaniasis, and in 2002 he published an important article on the *Epidemiological Enquiry* into these vectors.

With the alarming increase of dengue and the spread of *Aedes aegypti* throughout Brazil, he began intensive studies in collaboration with the Health Ministry and other public agencies to fight the spread of the disease. On innumerable occasions, he went to the Health Ministry in Brasília to express his opinion on the strategies that should be adopted regarding the prevention of this disease, and on the spread of the vector throughout the vast Brazilian territory.

He also studied the vectors of yellow fever in the epizootic outbreaks that spread from the north to the south of the country.

Other important studies of his were associated with mosquito populations, such as those that increased following construction of the Porto Primavera hydroelectric dam on the River Paraná.

In the School of Public Health, he tutored 16 masters and 8 doctoral students, many of whom were later appointed to important positions in teaching academies and public health services in the country. He taught innumerable courses to undergraduate, post-graduate, and specialization students, and also served on countless post-graduate examining boards and committees for the selection of technical and professional personnel. He published a total of 96 complete articles in both national and foreign periodicals and presented 52 papers at scientific meetings.

In his administrative capacity, he was twice head of the Epidemiology Department of the School of Public Health. The reform and modernization of the entomology laboratories there are a permanent memorial to his endeavors.

His personality was incomparable. He was always concerned with maintaining academic and scientific production. He was wholly dedicated to his responsibilities and soon identified himself fully with the School of Public Health and his research, and was incapable of living far from these activities. He spared no efforts to undertake with the greatest dedication the challenges he embraced. He was an enthusiastic field researcher, constantly living in the areas he was investigating, both in State of São Paulo and throughout Brazil. On these undertakings, he spent night after night in the open collecting samples, measuring them, and producing precious data on the ecology of the insects he was studying.

Emphatic, he always alerted those responsible when the control alternatives that he had identified as promising were not being adequately applied. As a colleague and tutor, he was always an enthusiastic visionary who introduced into his discourse ideas that were totally novel, impelled by the results of his research.

His constant good humor was another characteristic of his personality. In his study, always smiling, he never failed to give his attention to whoever needed his guidance. Constantly sought out by journalists, he was an intermediary between the scientific world and the general public. On these occasions, he always recommended intelligent and innovative alternatives based on the findings of his research on the monitoring and surveillance of vectors.

Almério, you have left us. But you have also left behind a great legacy that will guide new generations of entomologists on how to be scientifically objective in providing practical solutions to problems involving insect vectors of human diseases. You will always be remembered.



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