

## Obituary of A. Rotberg

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The creator of and responsible for the adoption of the term Hansen's disease, Abrahão Rotberg, passed on the first of November 2006, in São Paulo – SP. Strong in his convictions and extremely disciplined, he dedicated great part of his 94 years of life to Dermatology and, especially, to Hansen's disease, besides his family.

Born in January 12<sup>th</sup> 1912, in Rio de Janeiro, little after his parents' arrival in Brazil from Romania, he concluded his elementary studies at Colégio Pedro II in Rio de Janeiro. On the occasion of his parents moving to São Paulo, he attended medical school at USP, where he graduated in 1933. During the aforementioned interview, he proudly stated: "... I'm the only one in my class who still goes to the dermatologist office...", where, by the way, he saw many old friends and patients until 2003.

His first contacts with Hansen's disease took place in his last year of medicine school, when he practiced at Padre Bento Hospital (PBH), at the time the best equipped hospital for leprosy in the country, together with Bechelli and Mendonça de Barros, among others. From there came the motivation to write a monograph on Mitsuda's test (PhD thesis). He carried on with his studies while working as a physician at PBH and published his most important work, formulating the anergic margin theory, according to which, the margin was present in 20% of the popula-



tion with no Factor N, who were, therefore, genetically susceptible to the virchowian form of the disease.

In 1939, he presented his study on Factor N in a Pacific Science Meeting that took place in San Francisco (CA) and from there went to a practicum at the Skin Cancer Hospital in New York. When returning, in 1940, he was nominated for the Inspectorship of Leprosy Prophylaxis, in the municipality of São Paulo, in the most rigorous period of compulsory isolation.

Besides never having abandoned dermatological practice, he was an active member of the Brazilian Societies for Dermatology and Leprology, later called Hanseneology. He occupied many functions in public policies of leprosy control in São Paulo and, together with Bechelli, contributed to better knowledge of the disease in Brazil, winning several awards instituted by the National Department of Leprosy Prophylaxis for his renowned "monographs on leprosy".

In the 1960s, when he was professor at the Paulista School of Medicine, he was invited to be the head of the São Paulo Leprosy department, when he had the opportunity to abolish compulsory isolation and to propose the term Hansen's disease for the condition, in 1967. From then on, he took part in a both national and international campaign for changing the name, which was adopted by the Brazilian Ministry of Health in 1975. A round of applause! □

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