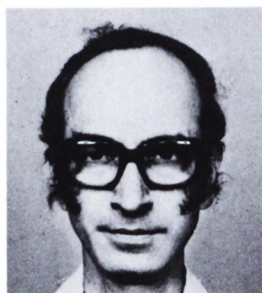


OBITUARIES

P. N. Neelan

January 16, 1932–June 15, 1991



India has lost some of its top leprologists in recent months, and Dr. P. N. Neelan has now been added to the list. Dr. Neelan was actively involved in the National Leprosy Eradication Programme of

India, and his sudden death on 15 June 1991 has snatched from us a distinguished and committed leprosy worker.

Son of a renowned advocate of Chingleput in South India, Pillaipakkam Nattu Neelan was born on 16 January 1932, had his early education in Chingleput, and graduated from the Stanley Medical College, Madras. He decided to take up leprosy work at a time when doctors were hesitant to treat leprosy patients. He joined the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute (CLTRI), Chingleput, in 1960. From then on, there was no going back in his decision to have leprosy work for his career. Public health was his main interest, and he obtained a D.P.H. from Calcutta University in 1968 and a M.P.H. from Johns Hopkins University in 1980. Subsequently he became the Deputy Director (Epidemiology) of CLTRI and then the Director, which post he held until his retirement in 1980. Later he was called in to be a Consultant Leprologist by the government of India and the World Health Organization (WHO), during which time he rendered considerable assistance to the antileprosy program of the government of India.

Dr. Neelan was a highly committed field worker. The difficulties of rural field work in India did not deter his enthusiasm for work. He carried out various types of field investigations. He was one of the earliest workers to assess the incidence of dapsone resistance during mass chemotherapy in

control programs. Another significant early investigation was on chemoprophylaxis with dapsone. He carried out immunoepidemiological studies as well as drug trials in the field. The establishment of the Central Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was another of his major contributions.

Dr. Neelan was a member of several expert bodies in the epidemiology of leprosy constituted by the government of India and WHO, during which time he attained international recognition. He was also on the three independent evaluation teams in 1986, 1987, and 1989 to assess the National Eradication Programme of India. In all those expert bodies, Dr. Neelan could contribute significantly in all technical and operational matters. Dr. Neelan was also invited to international workshops, seminars and conferences, and his vast practical experience was an asset at all these meetings.

During his tenure as Director of CLTRI, Dr. Neelan exhibited his leadership abilities. The Institute made a mark in epidemiology and operational research under his leadership, and also provided a scientific backup for all of the national programs and policies. The laboratory division was greatly enriched with many sophisticated pieces of equipment, thanks to the efforts and persuasiveness of Dr. Neelan. The training programs received a special fillip, particularly those that help in carrying out the multidrug therapy program.

As a person Dr. Neelan was very humble and extremely affable. A sportsman from school days, he was an enthusiastic cricketer and was actually the captain of the Stanley Medical College cricket team. His consideration for leprosy patients was very deep, which kept up his continued interest in leprosy work. Many leprosy patients join all of the Indian leprologists and leprosy workers in remembering Dr. Neelan for all of his kind deeds and achievements.

—K. V. Desikan