

## OBITUARIES

Prof. Le Kinh Due, M.D.  
1925–2001

With this writing, I would like to remember Prof. Le Kinh Due, an eminent leprologist and dermatologist, former director of the National Institute of Dermato-Venereology (NIDV), Hanoi, Vietnam,

who passed away on 6 February 2001.

Prof. Le Kinh Due was born in Ha Tinh province on 10 May 1925. He had his early education in Hue City and took his medical degree at Hanoi Medical College in 1952. Subsequently, he served the cause of national independence in the capacity of surgeon. After 1954, he received specialization training in immunology and histopathology of the skin at Humboldt University Charite, Berlin.

In 1975, he was appointed Chair for Dermatology, Bach Mai Hospital, and Head of Dermato-Venereological Department of Hanoi Medical College. He became Director of the NIDV and President of the Vietnam Dermatology Association in 1982.

Prof. Le Kinh Due began his career in the field of leprosy control more than 40 years ago, in the capacity of director of the program. Over the years, he made major contributions to establishing a nationwide antileprosy network from the central to grassroot levels. In 1981, a national movement of "leopard-skin eradication of leprosy" was launched by him and his colleagues under the guidance of the Ministry of Health. A program of leprosy eradication has been successfully implemented in a stepwise manner and proved to be very fruitful. The prevalence rate of the disease has declined dramatically from 15.0 per 10,000 in 1975 to 0.22 per 10,000 in 2000. In recent years, the stigma of leprosy was wiped out, even in mountainous areas. Leprosy patients were accepted in the commu-

nity and admitted to hospital according to their medical problems.

Prof. Le Kinh Due also had a long and distinguished career as an excellent teacher at Hanoi Medical College. He was always on the lookout for young professionals and became a mentor and encourager to many, some of whom are still active in leprosy. Anyone who made contact with him at once found a warm heart and an unusual determination to help.

Prof. Le Kinh Due was the author of many books, handbooks, and more than 100 scientific and investigational works on leprosy, sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and skin diseases. These were published both in Vietnam and in international journals. He was also the author of various poems particularly on leprosy which actively influenced people as well as leprosy patients.

Prof. Le Kinh Due was well known for his international activities. He visited and worked in many countries as a WHO consultant on leprosy. He was a member of the International Leprosy Association (ILA), deputy chairman of Association des Leprologues Langue Francaise, member of the WHO Expert Committee on Leprosy, and temporary advisor in many international congresses, regional meetings and workshops on leprosy and STD.

In appreciation of his valuable contribution to leprosy work, Prof. Le Kinh Due was awarded the "Health for All Medal" and the Sasakawa Health prize by WHO in 1988 and 1995, respectively. He also received many valuable awards for his outstanding service from the government of Vietnam.

His death is a great loss to our program and to all of his coworkers, students in Vietnam and colleagues in the world. Everyone who knew him will treasure their memories of a great physician and an outstanding man.

I am always proud to say that it was an honor and privilege for me to learn and work by his side.