OBITUARY

Alexander Symeonidis
1909-1972

Alexander Symeonidis, Director of the Theagenion Cancer Institute and Professor of Pathology, School of Medicine Aristotelian University, Thessaloniki, Greece, died suddenly on November 16, 1972.

Alexander Symeonidis was born on August 29, 1909, in Komotini, Greece. He was educated in Greece, receiving his medical doctorate in 1933 from the University of Athens. Even as a student, he knew his aim was to work in cancer research. He dedicated his life to leading the fight against cancer in Greece. The Theagenion Cancer Institute was established by him not only to serve northern Greece in the diagnosis and therapy of cancer, but also to operate as a research center of international standing.

Symeonidis was the first Greek to be awarded a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship which he held in Bonn from 1936 to 1938. He returned to Greece and remained throughout World War II as director of laboratories at the Cancer Hospital Agios Savvas in Athens. In 1947 he came to the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, where he spent 10 years in the laboratory of pathology. He returned to Greece in 1957 as Professor of Pathology at the University of Thessaloniki and began the difficult task of building up the Theagenion Cancer Institute.

Symeonidis was a man of many talents and an incurable optimist, with an unshakeable faith in mankind. “I cannot afford the luxury of pessimism,” he once said. He read widely and was a fine musician and supporter of the arts in Greece. An ardent admirer of Leonardo da Vinci, he constantly warned against over-specialization and encouraged the integration and interplay of the disciplines.

The American Association for Cancer Research, of which Alexander Symeonidis was a member from 1949, extends its sympathy to his widow, Dora, their two sons, Constantine and George, and to his co-workers at the Theagenion Institute.