The Cancer Congress of Guadalajara (Mexico)

This, the first cancer congress ever held in the Republic of Mexico, met at the School of Medicine of Guadalajara, Jalisco, from the 31st of October until the 6th of November, 1943. The Congress was sponsored by the President of the Republic, General M. Avila Camacho, the Federal and State Departments of Public Health, and the University of Guadalajara. It was organized by Dr. G. Vazquez Arroyo, President of the Executive Committee, with the active cooperation of Dr. E. Garcia Ruiz, general secretary; Drs. M. Baeza, M. Riebeling, and N. Pallares, secretaries; Dr. S. Hernandez Urtiz, treasurer; and several others acting as secretaries of the various sections. The Congress was held in conjunction with a general medical meeting, that of the “Segunda semana medica de Occidente,” where topics of general medicine were discussed. This was a fortunate occurrence, for the scope of the meeting was widened and, in addition, general practitioners and specialists in other fields had the opportunity of getting first hand information about cancer. Moreover, the sessions were always attended by almost the entire student body of the medical school of the University. Thus the Congress fulfilled a didactic mission. Since the full proceedings will be soon published, this report will be limited to a general idea of its activities.

The trend of the meeting was along clinical lines. In the main amphitheatre of the School of Medicine lectures on the most important types of cancer were given daily by authorities on their respective subjects. These lectures were largely of the ex-cathedra variety, which is especially interesting for general practitioners and students. A list of some of them follows: Cancer of the brain by Dr. Clemente Robles, of Mexico, D.F.; Cancer of the uterus, by Dr. M. Garcia; Cancer of the larynx, by Dr. F. E. Le Jeune; Cancer of the lung, by Dr. A. Ochsner (the three latter speakers from Coahulla, Mexico; Treatment of mouth cancer, by Dr. German Garcia, of Mexico, D.F.; Notes on uterine cancer, by Drs. J. Velasquez Uriarte and O. Rojas, of Mexico, D.F.; X-rays in the diagnosis of uterine cancer, by Dr. A. Wiesman, of the Metropolitan Hospital of New York. A symposium covering the clinical, histopathological, and hematological aspects of Hodgkin’s disease was given by Drs. Chavez, Mendiola, and Amozurrutia respectively. An interesting device (broncho-catheter) to secure biopsies of lung growths was presented by Dr. A. Perez Ara, of Havana, Cuba.

Contributions to the theoretical and experimental sides of the problem were few. Among them should be mentioned a comprehensive review by Dr. F. Giral, of Mexico, D.F., of hydrocarbons, bile acids, and sex hormones in relation to cancer, and an account by Dr. F. Duran-Reynals of the experimental work on cancer carried out in various departments of Yale University.

The social aspects of the disease and plans for cancer control were fully covered by several authorities. Dr. R. R. Spencer, Director of the National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, gave a paper read by Dr. Riebeling in Spanish on the program of the cancer service of the United States of America while other papers on comparable subjects, but of a clinical type, were read by Dr. I. Millan, head of the Cancer Unit of the Hospital General of Mexico and Dr. M. Baeza, secretary of the recently inaugurated Cancer Unit of Guadalajara Medical School. Dr. F. Valdes Villarreal, of the Hospital General, read an excellent paper that was accompanied by moving pictures on training in the diagnosis of cancer.

Operative clinical sessions on interesting cases were carried out every day in Civilian Hospital of Guadalajara, connected with the Medical School. Among them one may mention a thyroidectomy by Dr. G. Vazquez Arroyo, a gynecological operation by Dr. R. Amor, and a resection of the lower jaw by Dr. A. Velasco Zimbron.

The Congress brought together a large number of physicians and scientists from different nations, the largest representation being that of the United States, with 40 members. Naturally, the visitors had an ample opportunity of getting acquainted with their colleagues south of the Rio Grande and could appreciate their magnificent skill as surgeons, their extraordinary potentialities as men of science, and their generosity and charm as hosts. One is tempted, indeed, to describe the varied and bountiful style of the entertainments, which were made possible by a generous grant from the Mexican Government and contributions from several commercial firms. Dr. G. Vazquez Arroyo was the central figure of the Congress. A large part of its scientific success was due to his initiative and activity.
while Mrs. Vazquez Arroyo was at the head of the committee that organized the program of entertainment. Many of the foreign delegates visited the scientific institutions in other cities of the Republic, notably Mexico City. They thus had the chance of watching a crucial stage in the scientific development of a nation whose racial sources are so different from those of the United States. The visitors learned how extremely brilliant Mexican science is as far as individuals are concerned, but how deficient in several ways in respect to the organization of groups. However, signs of the creation of a proper environment are everywhere, and centers of learning such as the still unfinished Institute of Cardiology, directed by Dr. J. Chavez; the Institute of Public Health and Tropical Diseases; and still others, are as good as any similar institutions in the United States. The influence of scholars, refugees from the Spanish Republic and the best minds in their various lines, begins to be felt, and men like Blas Cabrera, the Girals, Bolivar, Costero, Carrasco Formiguera, Folch, German Garcia, and many others, are doing their utmost to contribute to progress. It is easy indeed to foresee a brilliant future for Mexican science.

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