Obituary

C. W. Chacko, 1912—1973

Dr. C. W. Chacko, Emeritus Scientist of the Indian Council of Medical Research, retired Professor of Serology, Madras Medical College, and Serologist, Government General Hospital, Madras, was among the 48 victims of the ill-fated Boeing that crashed at New Delhi on May 31, 1973. He was on his way to Burma as a W.H.O. consultant in serology.

Chacko Wallapura Chacko was born on February 17, 1912. He qualified M.B., B.S. at the Madras Medical College in 1938 and joined the Indian Army as a Commissioned Medical Officer in 1940, where he reached the rank of Lt.-Col. After a distinguished career he was released from the army, and in 1947 obtained the D.T.M. of the School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta. Subsequently he served for 2 years at the King Institute of Preventive Medicine, Guindy, Madras, and in 1950 was fortunate enough to obtain an appointment at the world-famous Wright-Fleming Institute of Microbiology, London, where he specialized in the immunology and serology of syphilis. He was the first to set up the TPI test in London, and in recognition of his outstanding research work was awarded the Ph.D. of London University in 1952. He was specially chosen by Dr. R. V. Rajam as the most suitable person for the post of Serologist and Professor of Serology at the upgraded Institute of Venereology, Madras, in February, 1953. He retired from the Tamilnadu Medical Service on February 16, 1970.

Dr. Chacko organized an up-to-date V.D. Laboratory at the Institute. Later a Reference Laboratory for standardization of serological tests for syphilis in the country was also established and is still functioning. He successfully cultivated and maintained syphilis and yaws treponemes in rabbits in a tropical country such as India. Along with G. M. Nair he

evolved a new culture medium for the gonococcus known as the Chacko-Nair medium.

He had an extensive and detailed knowledge of serology, immunology, and microbiology. He was dedicated to his work and spared no efforts in the organization and maintenance of high standards. He was a good teacher, a first class research officer, and a pioneer in immunology and serology to whom venereology is greatly indebted.

His outstanding work at the Institute of Venereology was widely recognized, particularly by the World Health Organization; his V.D. Laboratory gained an international reputation, and he became a W.H.O. consultant, advising on the setting up of similar laboratories in other countries.

Dr. Chacko trained many medical and paramedical personnel from India as well as from the countries of South-East Asia in the laboratory aspects of venereology.

He contributed original articles to various scientific journals, was a founder fellow of the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences, a member of various professional and scientific bodies, and an adviser and assessor to the University and Public Service Commission selectors. After his retirement he was appointed as Emeritus Scientist by the I.C.M.R. to enable him to continue his research at the Institute of Venereology, Madras.

He was a good sportsman who took an active part in sports at the Madras Medical College, and being of a pious and charitable disposition was connected with many social service activities.

Dr. Chacko is survived by his wife, who is a leading paediatrician in Tamilnadu, and by three young daughters.

C. N. Sowmini