

Armand Frappier



It's to the insight, tenacity and scientific flair of Dr. Armand Frappier that we owe the use of Bacille Calmette-Guérin in the prevention of tuberculosis in Canada. But his influence goes well beyond our national boundaries. The concept of preventive medicine and public hygiene is widely accepted today. In 1923, however, medicine was unable to help his mother who died of galloping phthisis. This sad experience influenced the young Frappier to devote his life to preventive medicine.

Armand Frappier nourished a keen interest in scientific research

and by the time he completed his medical studies he had established the first laboratories in three hospitals. In 1930, he studied chemistry and basic science with a major in microbiology. Thanks to a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship, he registered at the University of Rochester and attended courses at the health laboratories of both the state and city of New York as well as at the Trudeau School of Tuberculosis.

During his years of training he heard many arguments against BCG vaccine and decided to go to France where he had the privilege of working at the Institut Pasteur in Paris under the tutorship of Dr. Léopold Nègre with Calmette and Guérin, the discoverers of the famous vaccine.

Returning to his native Quebec in 1933, he created the BCG Laboratory, with the assistance of the National Research Council of Canada and the Quebec Ministry of Health, to produce the vaccine in Canada. In 1949 he proved the innocuousness and efficiency of BCG and encouraged federal, provincial and international authorities to permit the systematic use of the vaccine to prevent tuberculosis.

In 1938 Dr. Frappier worked toward the incorporation of the Institut de microbiologie et d'hygiène de Montréal that would become the Institut Armand-Frappier in 1975. He adopted a formula that turned out to be rewarding for the

institute: he successfully mixed research, specialist training and services to preventive medicine and industry. Vaccines were produced and sold and the proceeds were reinvested in research programs.

Once again at Dr. Frappier's prompting, the Université de Montréal opened a school of public health in 1945 to train the staff of health units. It was the first French-speaking school of its type in the world. For 20 years, in addition to the local enrolment, over 150 students from developing countries acquired a sound training in public health.

A member of various committees of national and international research agencies, Dr. Frappier represented Canada at the first world health meeting in Geneva in 1948. He has worked with the World Health Organization and the International Union Against Tuberculosis. Under the Colombo Plan, he was a member of delegations to Japan and India in 1957. He has attended scientific sessions in eastern Europe, Istanbul and Jerusalem.

The prestigious Université de Paris honoured Dr. Frappier with a doctorate in 1964. He holds four other honorary doctorates. Made a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1969, Dr. Frappier received the F.N.G. Starr Award from the Canadian Medical Association in 1979 as well as the Québec Prix Marie-Victorin. ■

Denise Robillard