



MALARIA COLLECTION FROM THE MUSEU DA SAÚDE

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Abstract

There are multiple types of objects in Museu da Saúde (health museum) that illustrate the story of Malaria in Portugal, specifically in the area of the Vale do Rio Sado. They are also a testimony of the role that the former Instituto de Malariologia (Institute of Malaria) in Águas de Moura played at local, regional and national levels, over the decades that preceded and led to the eradication of the disease in Portugal.

Until the first half of the 20th century, Malaria was a major cause of death in Portugal, and its eradication was only achieved in 1958.

Initially, malaria prevailed in urban areas. However, during the 19th century, with the development of sanitation, it became an increasingly rural disease, with special focus on rice growing areas. Indeed, the first rice fields of the country – at Vale do Sado – came to be an endemic area where the disease developed more seriously. Meanwhile, Francisco Cambournac (1903-1994) demonstrated the connection between the rice fields and the mosquito that transmits malaria.

The problem was so serious that the populations' hostility to the rice culture remained until the 30s of the 20th century. However, rice cultivation was fundamental to national economy. It wasn't possible to extinguish it simply. Thus, in the same decade, started the effective fight against malaria, one of the "banners" of the Estado Novo.

The Estação para o Estudo do Sezonismo (malarial study station) in Águas de Moura (Vale do Sado) was born from the collaboration between the General Direction of Health and the Rockefeller Foundation (American non-governmental organization and

key government partner in the fight against malaria). It started to work in 1934, under the guidance of Dr. Rolla Hill.

Given the importance of the work done in 1939, the station became Instituto de Malariologia, under Francisco Cambournac direction (between 1939 and 1954). In 1948, Francisco Cambournac integrated the WHO Malaria Expert Board. Indeed, the Institute gained greater international relevance, namely, the malaria international courses taught at the institute involving WHO fellows from various countries.

The museum objects are the starting point to address the methodologies and carried out research (e.g. scientific instruments, graphic records, publications); the courses (e.g. photographs); strategies to combat malaria, like chemical, biological and mechanical campaigns (e.g. objects collection, sprayers, clothing) and the protection of populations (e.g. prevention campaigns posters). On this basis, we try to show the importance of studying health museum collections. It helps to preserve the memory of the health history in Portugal and can be a source for the malaria study in the country.