

## HISTORICAL ARTICLE

# Antonio Prudente: Turning Dreams into Reality

Cristina Iori<sup>1</sup>; Eliana Lopes Nassif<sup>2</sup>

*1 Journalist graduated in 1985 by the School of Communications and Arts (ECA-USP), she has already been part of the most important broadcasting systems in the country (UOL, Folha de S.Paulo, Editora Globo, Veja magazine, Jornal do Brasil, O Estado de S.Paulo, MTV). She has recently worked at the Cancer Hospital on the books edition "A Half Century of Cancer Research - the Cancer Hospital and Institute Ludwig Partnership" and "The Child with Cancer - What Should We Know?", published by the Cancer Hospital.*

*2 In charge of the historical research. Bachelor and Licentiate in History in 1989 by University of São Paulo and Master on Social History from the same University in 1995. She has publications on themes related to Family and Child History, Historical Demography and Research Source. Since 1999, she is managing the Index Advance, Consultantship Company in organization and information systems. Responsible for the Areas of Collections Organization and History Research, she has managed works in small and big private companies, and public institutions.*

The Cancer Hospital, that reaches excellence pattern comparable to the most influential international institutes today, came out as a result of a long and popular campaign of funds raising promoted by São Paulo Association to Combat Cancer (APCC), founded in 1934 by doctor Antonio Prudente (1906-1965). Prudente had dreamed about an Institute that centralized care, research and professional qualification as part of his project to establish specific methods for cancer research, prevention and treatment.

In 1934, year of the APCC foundation, Oncology was not even qualified as a subject in the universities or specialty in the country hospitals. After all, the universal principle of medicine is the cure and it did not seem a good professional initiative to dedicate to a lost cause by definition.

Cancer incidence in large urban centers had increased in the first decades of last century. In 1939, it was the third cause of death in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro states, according to the Statistical Annual of Brazil (IBGE), just after tuberculosis and heart failure.

Statistics had led to the first official attempt to restrain the problem. During the New

State Dictatorship (1937-1945), the President Getúlio Vargas had signed the Law n.378 (Dec.1937). It created, at that time, the Center of Cancerology in the Federal District Hospital Healthcare Service (then in Rio de Janeiro). However, there has never been an effective action from the Government on the services responsible for healthcare in order to educate health professionals and public about cancer treatment and prevention.<sup>1</sup>

One who struggled against cancer, physician or patient, was in fact a loser. Physicians did not follow any standardized protocol when facing the disease. Adopted measure was to excise tumors in extensive surgeries that could mutilate patient, but did not avoid cancer recurrence. And cancer always recurred. Until the 30's, 90% of the patients developed metastases up to five years after first cancer diagnosis.<sup>2</sup> A very disappointing picture. On the other hand, a fascinating scientific challenge.

A challenge in which launched a young physician, Antonio Prudente, graduated with honor, in 1928, from the University of São Paulo.<sup>3</sup> He was born in Piracicaba, São Paulo countryside, on July 8, 1906. He was the

Brazilian first Civilian President's grandson. His grandfather was Prudente de Moraes, a lawyer of few words and no smile that had taken national presidency completely disbelieved and had just consolidated the newly installed Republic in Brazil. Prudente de Moraes was elected in 1894, at the age of 53, with the support of São Paulo coffee farmers elite. He was a popular figure, known by the nickname of "Biriba" (Rustic).

In his first two years as President, Biriba, a "muleteer's" son that used to sell longeared equines in São Paulo countryside - explaining his nickname -, had escaped from the death in an ambush. He did not have any doubts in decreeing state of siege, when it was necessary, to preside over without the persuasion of Floriano Peixoto's military republicans group.. During his government, the surrender of Canudos took place in the Northeast and the Federalist Revolution in the South ended.

There was nobody to receive the elected president to exert the Presidency nor any Official Ceremony at the Government Palace, in Rio. In 1898 at the end of his mandate, he went back to Piracicaba, and continued to work as a lawyer, as if nothing had happened before. He died there from tuberculosis in 1902, four years before the birth of who would be his most illustrious grandson, Antonio.

The Prudentes were composed of reserved people, with disposition to a lot of work and of an apparent modesty that hid strong wills.

Antonio spent the first years of 1910 as an internal student at São Bento School, traditional school of the Benedictine monks that was beside the monastery of the Order, in São Paulo City downtown. His two-year older brother, Prudente Meirelles de Moraes, studied there - even so, his first name was Prudente. The two brothers have shared good school grades.

Antonio had a spectacular school performance in the year 1919. In the annals of the school, his name had appeared highlighted in all disciplines: Greek, Latin, English, physics, chemistry and natural sciences - whose master was nothing less than Alfredo Taunay, the Viscount of Taunay, author of the romance "Innocence". And his name also appears in the prayer groups, as altar boy of religious practices, therefore, in the school's life. What did exactly

happen in 1919 to wake up so strongly the vitality and the will of the boy Antonio?

First World War had finished in 1917, with great number of deaths. It had been followed by the scourge of the epidemic Spanish influenza, which had arrived in Brazil. In the annals of the 1919 academic year, the action against the disease conducted by the monks is mentioned. The monastery and school practically have become a hospital to attend the patients, and casualties among employees and students, is reported. This fact must have marked his medical future.

The following year, Prudente oldest brother was already a graduate and leader of the reservists group - the exalted passion of postwar period seemed to have arrived to the family. Antonio would lose his brother years later. Prudente, who was an engineer, died at the age of 28, during the Constitutionalist Revolution in 1932.

Antonio Prudente's illustrious ascendancy could have influenced him. However, he opted for the uncertainty of the science, surely a harder road.

After graduating, Prudente went to Berlin in 1929 and there remained until 1931. His aim was to learn Professor Franz Keysser's new surgical techniques, a reference name on medical technological progress in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His book "Die Elektrochirurgie" (1931) was considered a definitive masterpiece. ("Die Elektrochirurgie", von Franz Keysser, Leipzig, Fischers Medizinische Buchhandlung, 1931, is one of the selected books by The Baken Library and Museum, a center for education and learning of the history, cultural context and of application of electricity and magnetism. It has 11.000 rare books and 2.500 scientific instruments).<sup>4</sup>

Electric bistouries. Those were the synthesis of the technique developed by Keysser and his team. There it was exhaustively performed surgical treatment of malignant neoplasias. Electro surgery has opened new possibilities of cancers cure considered until then untreatable. The technique consisted of using not only the electric bistouries as well as buttons and electric plates with which the coagulation of the tumor tissues was achieved. In 1931 when returning from Germany, Prudente was employed as assistant on surgical technique in School of Medicine of the University of São Pau-

lo. He also lectured at the São Paulo School of Medicine (current Unifesp). He returned to Brazil convinced that the technological advances applied to medicine could improve the quality of assistance delivered to patients with neoplasia.

Between the assistance in his clinic and the work as a professor, Prudente has set out time to get the surgeon's position at the State Department of Leprosy (Documents and Curriculum Vitae). He had worked till 1937 as plastic surgeon attending patients devastated by the Hansen's disease. In his specialization period in Germany, Prudente learned plastic surgery bases aiming reconstruction after the tumors treatment. The asylum-colonies of compulsory confinement for Hansen's disease patients have spread along Brazil in the 30's, and they represented, at that time, an important progress in terms of public healthcare policy.<sup>5</sup>

The care of patients with leprosy can have influenced the young physician to public spirit actions.

## THE CREATION OF APCC

Antonio Prudente's public campaign against cancer began to come about in 1933, when a series of five articles of his authorship was published in the newspaper "O Estado de S.Paulo".<sup>2</sup> The articles spoke about the perplexity in facing the mystery of cancer origin and treatment techniques, but mainly about the possibility of cure and prevention.

"(...) cancer is a disease of perfect curability, when treated on time" (...), declared Antonio Prudente, in his first article of a series, published on September 4, 1933. The essential factors for success are people education" and the need of "early diagnosis"

One year later, in 1934, during a banquet offered in honor of Antônio Cândido de Camargo, who had retired from the Surgical Clinics chair of School of Medicine of the University of São Paulo, Prudente got sufficient number of doctors' signatures to create the São Paulo Association to Combat Cancer (APCC).<sup>6</sup> The entity aimed to raise funding to combat cancer, to prepare volunteers and specialized professionals and to develop public educational campaigns. The construction of the hospital was part of the research project and centralization

of the assistance, besides professional training on oncology for doctors, nurses, dentists and social workers. Prudente also dreamed keeping global exchange with similar organizations inside and outside Brazil.

The first president of APCC was the Prudente's surgery master, Antônio Cândido de Camargo, and the vice-president of Social Council, another Professor from School of Medicine, Celestino Bourroul. Together, they organized the basis of the fight against cancer and the building of an Institute, which would centralize and divulge to the whole country research, teaching, and treatment advanced methods.

The triad composed by Camargo, Bourroul and Prudente was powerful. When Prudente began to implement his dream, he attracted to him two of his dearest masters. Each one represented a pillar of his project. On one side, it was the scientific stringency and precision and, on the other side, the devotion and abnegation necessities to the practice of medicine.

Since 1913, year of the foundation of School of Medicine of University of São Paulo, till 1934, Camargo (1864-1947) was the professor responsible for the surgical clinics chair, the specialty that Prudente would continue with passion. The master transmitted to his disciple the first teachings on the area, the whole advanced knowledge that he had brought from his studies in Geneva, Switzerland, and in the Austrian capital, Vienna. Camargo belonged to Jacques Reverdin's team, one of the great names of the surgery in the turning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Brazil, he was the pioneer in neurosurgery, and brought important contributions for the treatment of brain and spinal cord tumors.<sup>7</sup>

Bourroul (1880-1958) was also founder of School of Medicine - in 1913, and responsible for the chair of Medical Natural History. One year later, he became chief of the Parasitology cathedra. As a professor, Bourroul had weird habits. He always carried with him his famous notebook, with each student's name and picture.<sup>8</sup> But it was in the practice of medicine that Bourroul noble spirit spread out. From 1931 to 1958, year of his death, Bourroul was the chief of the 6<sup>th</sup> Medicine of Men of Santa Casa of Mercy of São Paulo. Every morning, he examined every patient of his department in that

hospital. He was a fervorous Catholic, what must have touched Antonio Prudente's heart, former-leader of the Congregação Mariana of the Colégio São Bento.<sup>9</sup>

## UNION WITH CARMEN

Prudente concentrated all his energy and efforts in his campaign against cancer. Maybe for that, it did not seem to him so irrational to travel to Germany in 1938, less than one year before Hitler invaded Poland. He took a ship as a member of the Brazilian doctors' commission that would know the facilities of German healthcare services. Serious, shy, and deeply convinced, Antonio Prudente could not guess what destiny had reserved to him in Berlin, at the preannouncement edge of the Second World War.

On the ship, in the way to Germany, he met a short, smiling girl from Rio Grande do Sul state, far educated for the patterns of that time, Carmem of Revorêdo Annes Dias (1911-2001). She was the daughter of the Brazilian cortege chief, Heitor Annes Dias, Dictator Getúlio Vargas's personal doctor. The short 27-year-old girl spoke English, French, Italian and Spanish, and she had already written her first book of trips, "From Brazil to Japan", a collection of their articles for the newspaper "A Gazeta", in Associated Press, produced during a visit to that country.<sup>10</sup>

Prudente had arranged a way to talk to the girl about his passions. At a dinner, he gave Carmen a book on cancer by his authorship underneath the table, and declared himself with a dedication: "May God join us forever and our thought be only one: the fight against this terrible disease."

The small brunette, who was always laughing, even in document picture, should have smiled when received the present underneath the table. Carmem had certainly opened her ever-smile, that one day would be known from North to South of Brazil as the registered mark of the fight against cancer.

Carmem had literally taken that dedication. They got married two months later, on December 28, 1938, in the Church of Rosário, in Rio de Janeiro (Figure 1).

- It was not that fast. I waited for 13 days to accept the marriage proposal -, Carmem used

to joke when telling the history to volunteers of the Cancer Hospital. The book that was Antonio Prudente's gift was always by her side, on her desk, as a reminder, according to the testimony of Lucia Annes Dias Vignoli, 64-year old, Carmem Prudente niece.

Together, Antonio and Carmem Prudente crossed the world in International Cancer Congresses. They traveled to 39 countries and visited 206 cities. Wherever they went, they received honors, decorations and prizes. Carmem wrote 15 books on their trips around the five continents. Every place, she gave lectures to auditoriums of congresses, societies, and assistance organizations. The theme was always the same: her adventure leading the largest voluntary action ever done in Brazil.



Figure 1 - Carmem and Antônio Prudente (Archives of Antônio Prudente Foundation)

## THE VOLUNTARY ACTION

The beginning of the Second World War must have hindered the works of APCC. During four years, from 1939 to 1943, there were no meetings. There is a registration of a meeting in October 1943. Prudente reported their attempts for the creation of the so dreamed Institute for Combating Cancer .

Since May 1946, first year of his achievement, the anticancer annual campaign has become a great annual event in São Paulo.

On that year, they distributed 25 thousand posters in every city regions and organized educational exhibition at the recently inaugurated Prestes Maia Gallery, in São Paulo downtown. The exhibition was a type of horrors house, with enormous tumors exposed in formaldehyde to attract the public attention. Some pedestrians did not tolerate. They felt bad and ran off from the place. But everybody entered just to take a look at “that”. The exposition organized by Carmem Prudente was useful as an alert on the need for the precocious diagnosis of the disease. It also proved to be a powerful weapon to raise funds to build the hospital. Cancer, until then a word that people hesitated to pronounce, spread out (according to the testimony of Maria Antonieta Vaz de Lima Bandeira, 86 year-old, who occupied for 4 decades the position vice-president).

Few days before the beginning of the campaign, on April 29, 1946, Carmem Prudente created the Women Network for Combating Cancer. Its goals were enumerated in a document, and they were not modest. The Network would be an organization composed by a division of forty chiefs, with the proposal of enlisting 30 thousand people for cancer combat. Two hundred nuclei (groups) of the Women Network would exist throughout Brazil. The nuclei (groups) would organize campaigns destined to get financial support with the educational purpose of divulging knowledge on cancer along the country, besides delivering cases of the disease for treatment. In the 80's, there were 168 nuclei of the Women Network distributed in Brazil. In 1998, there were 1600 volunteers in entire São Paulo State.<sup>11</sup>

Carmem Prudente never stopped: She organized beneficent teas, fashion parades in the refined Madame Rosita living room, and on Augusta Street - then a stronghold of São Paulo rich people, or a true collection in the neighborhoods of São Paulo. In three months, during the year of 1946, the amount collected was Cr\$ 7,500,000.00 (equivalent to US\$ 2.4 million, in values of May of 2005).<sup>12</sup>

One of the campaigns yielded more than money to hospital cause. In 1947, the student of Medicine, Humberto Torloni, raised from the periphery of São Paulo the amount of 400 con-

tos de réis (about US\$ 124 thousand), and he won the championship organized for students who had obtained funds for the construction of the Cancer Hospital. This fact gave Torloni a scholarship for specialization in pathological anatomy the United States. Torloni, who would become, in the following years, one of the most tireless doctors of Prudente's team, accomplished international career at World Health Organization, during the sixties. Today, back to Cancer Hospital, he became the own soul of the institution.

### THE FIRST TUMOR CLINIC

The campaign was such a big success that, in 1946, APCC made possible the so dreamed first Tumor Clinic. The contract between the Santa Cruz Hospital and APCC predicted a 20-year cession, for which APCC would supply Cr\$ 200,000.00 (approximately US\$ 62,000, 00) to the hospital, value to be reimbursed in a period of two years.<sup>13</sup>

Tumor Clinic of Santa Cruz Hospital was the first Prudente step towards his dream to standardize cancer care. There and in other two advanced units in the cities of Campinas and Santos, both maintained by APCC, mainly indigents were taken care of.. Until 1950, more than 13.000 radiotherapy applications and a thousand surgeries were carried out.

Simultaneously to this service, offered to whom sought the Clinic, from 1948, Antonio Prudente had settled in the Liberdade neighborhood, in São Paulo, the fundamental stone of the Cancer Hospital (Figure 2 ).<sup>14</sup> It was the so dreamed Central Institute that would be named after A.C. Camargo, dead in 1947.



**Figure 2** – Launching of the fundamental stone of Cancer Hospital. From left to right, engineer Rino Levi, Mr. Mafra and Professor Prudente

## THE DREAM CLOSER AND CLOSER

APCC had gotten the cession for use by São Paulo State Finance two lots in the José Getúlio Street, open only ten years earlier, in 1939, in a area of small farms, close to the line of trolley of Vergueiro Street. The 23 de Maio Avenue did not even exist yet, only a ravine that separated the city into two sides. In the other side, it was located the Beneficência Portuguesa Hospital.

The modernist architect Rino Levi, son of Italians graduated in Rome and Milan designed the Cancer Hospital. He always worked in white apron, and spoke very little - the silence used to be absolute in his studio. Whenever discussions happened, they were fast and conclusive. As in a surgery table.

From his drawing board he came out the structure with the wide mezzanine on which 12-floor leaned on, and that would be considered a beautiful example of functional architecture.

## THE PROMISES FOR THE FUTURE

The Cancer Hospital had on April 23, 1953, date of its inauguration, 307 beds, 70% of them reserved for indigent, according to Antonio Prudente's aspirations. In the underground floor there were some equipments mainly imported from Germany. They were six sets for radiodiagnosis and for treatment, five common radiotherapy machines of 1,300 milligrams of radium, a bomb of ten grams of radium and a betatron - enough nuclear energy to make a bomb, as it was evaluated by the newspapers at that time.<sup>15</sup>

The new hospital brought to São Paulo the most advanced collection of equipments for cancer diagnosis - besides X-ray and radiology machines, there was complete material for endoscopy and pathological anatomy sections.<sup>16</sup>

To explain it: biopsies, in other words, the act of removing small fragments for observation and diagnosis under microscopic analysis, had already existed since the 20's, although without success in the medical practice. But, from systematic studies and the creation of morphological criteria of analysis, the microscopic diagnosis became more reliable and valuable. Only in the second half of the 40's pathologists began to integrate the also recently established multiprofessional teams for cancer

diagnosis and treatment.<sup>17</sup>

Prudente had already worked with multiprofessional teams in the Tumor Clinic of Santa Cruz Hospital. He had extended that practice to Cancer Hospital and had given a department status to Radiotherapy, which had incorporated new therapies to the clinical treatment of the disease.

And there was the surgeon board, which would be the spinal cord of the Cancer Hospital. The deeds performed by those doctors and their teams in the 9th floor five operating rooms of the Surgical Center, would spread to the whole building the feeling of respect, the sense of sacrifice and hope for cancer cure.

The Medical Board was composed of 92 specialists in 1953. They were physicians, surgeons, radiotherapists, laboratory workers and 35 nurses - the legendary "schwester", German women trained by the Red Cross that lived inside of the hospital until the half of the 70's and became famous for the seriousness, competence and devotion with which they treated patient and doctors (Figure 3).

From its creation, there was the interest for the cataloguing of information on the disease. From this resulted a great scientific documentation, that to date it contains a collection of 400,000 pictures and drawings, one of the most complete oncology libraries, with 14,465 volumes, besides medical archives, consisting of 300,000 cases registered, since the year of 1953. The Hospital also built the largest Bank of Tumors of Latin America, with samples in paraffin of all neoplastic tissues withdrawn from the patients since 1953. Since 1997, these samples have been frozen.

Cancer Hospital offered in its beginning the medical residence, the second program in Brazil - in 1953 there was only the Public Servant Hospital, in Rio de Janeiro. A residential center with capacity for 35 doctors was built in an area enclosed to the Institute. The residence period lasted 40 months, divided into two periods: a general one, common to all the specialties, and the second already in the resident chosen area. It was created there the first medical residence program in Radiotherapy in 1955. That would only happen five years later in the National Institute of Cancer (Rio de Janeiro) and in 1965 in the Clinics Hospital of University of São Paulo.<sup>18</sup>



**Figura 3** – Antônio and Carmem Prudente and the schwester nurses

### THE DAY BY DAY HEROES

Few doctors left the Cancer Hospital after the residence period. Because, although surviving from donations from São Paulo population, facing all types of difficulties, welcoming indigent in terrible condition, even so, the Cancer Hospital would impose a great appeal on the young physicians who passed over there. The first group of residents, who concluded their residence in 1955, was constituted by doctors Antonio Pedro Mirra, Antonio Ribeiro of Amorim, Arthur Oscar of Souza e Sá, Clibas Corrêa, David Heiz-Erich, Isidoro Dreicon, José Batista of Silva Neto, José Leite of Figueiredo, José Roberto Barreto Lins, Luciano Ângelo Calvis, Normando de Bellis, Paulo Barbosa Caldas, Radion Schweler Barbosa, Salvador Antonio Sabino, Silvio de Freitas Cavalcanti and Walter Affonso de Carvalho. The first resident chief was Alfredo Abrão. Many members of this group became titular doctors of the Cancer Hospital.<sup>19</sup>

Since 1954, the Celestino Bourroul School of Cancerology the first of Brazil functioned there. One of the most enthusiastic goals of Antonio Prudente - graduate specialist doctors on Oncology - was delineated in 1961, when the Cancer Hospital turned into a Complementary Institute of University of São Paulo, and the medical residence started to be an Extension of the academic course (Decree 39,375 of 11/21/1961).

Even overloaded by the service, the doctors could produce high quality scientific articles, supported by a great amount of studied cases, a characteristic of the clinical publications

originated at the hospital. Residents' first chief, Alfredo Abrão, published in a journal of local circulation the text "Anatomical study of the internal mammary ganglion chain in 100 cases", in 1954. His work had great repercussion.<sup>20</sup>

Surgeons, radiologists and pathologists from Cancer Hospital publications have changed diagnosis and therapeutics conducts. From 1953 to 1960, there is a record of 50 articles published in indexed journals.<sup>21</sup>

### THE HARD REALITY

The waiting queue in the Cancer Hospital grew every year. 75 % of the patients didn't have how to pay. Among the patients, in the year of 1953, they were mainly victims of skin cancer, followed by uterus, breast and stomach cancer, in this order, as statistics published in the annual reports of the hospital. It was registered about 6,500 consultations, 816 surgeries and nothing less than 4,887 radiotherapy applications.<sup>22</sup>

The building of the Hospital had the cost of Cr\$ 50,000,000.00 (the equivalent the US\$ 7.5 million) to APCC funds. In December 1954, shortly after one-year inauguration, it was registered a deficit of Cr\$ 13,120,312.00 (US\$ 1.5 million). The deficit represented more than 20% of the total value spent in the construction of the hospital.

Difficulties were enormous. A year after foundation, in 1954, the number of surgeries quadruplicated to 3,609. The number of people who looked for attendance triplicated - 19,435 consultations were carried out. In manifesto of the Campaign against Cancer published in the newspapers in 1954, APCC announced the inauguration of the AC Camargo Hospital and it started a new force for fundraising from donations. According to the document, to maintain it in activity, it was necessary Cr\$ 20,000,000.00 (about US\$ 2.4 million) a year. Donations were the exclusive form to obtain that amount, since only one third of the patients of the hospital were payers.<sup>23</sup>

The struggle for the Cancer Hospital seemed not to have an end, and it started on April 23, 1953, when its doors opened. The Antonio Prudente hardest battles were still to come.

## THE STRUGGLE

The spectacular progression of the medical procedures and service numbers carried out at Cancer Hospital during its first decade of existence was not equivalent to its finances in the period. It seemed unbelievable: how could it be possible to maintain such attendance indexes practically without money?

An administrative suicidal, a finance bureaucrat specialist would say. A miracle, would reply any citizen in front of the number of hospital stays, successful surgeries, and incorporated therapies to the treatment of the cancer.

Four times, in its first decade of existence, the Cancer Hospital was threatened of interrupting completely its activities: in 1954, 1957, 1960 and 1962. Great part of that period, from 1953 to 1958, the hospital was under Antonio Prudente's direction.

The Cancer Hospital first great crisis happened a little after one year of its inauguration and it led to the deactivation, in 1955, of one third of the beds destined to non-payers -50 beds were disable, and the doctors' wage had a reduction of 50%.<sup>24</sup>

The hospital survived mostly by donations, what turned very arduous the task of administering it. Federal and State governments made little contribution to the construction of the hospital - only 15% of the total cost.

The supporting situation continued the same after inauguration. Although it was recognized as of public interest, the Government aids never exceeded the private donations, collected through the Women Network for Combating Cancer and the income obtained with the patrimonial goods of the institution.

The situation worsened with the inflationary process of middle of the fifties. In the annual report of 1956, there is a registration that the cost of a bed-day had triplicated along the last years, reaching in 1956 the value of Cr\$ 10,000.00 (about US\$ 815).

In 1957, an episode happened and it was registered in the annual report as "the great crisis" of Cancer Hospital. The Federal Economic Bank (Caixa Economica Federal) decided to execute the APCC debt for the construction of the hospital. At that time, just

the interests were paid. The Bank's management entered with a writ of extent. Antonio Prudente solicited President Juscelino Kubitschek who authorized the debts cancellation (Figure 4).

The crisis of 1957 was considered of a great extent just because nobody knew then what was coming. For the first time, in 1960, Antonio Prudente talked about closing the hospital, or transferring its patrimony to the State administration. Sick, dismissed from the institution presidency since 1958 - he passed an important part of that year as an inpatient at his own hospital -, Prudente began to give signs that he couldn't maintain his dreamed project in eternal emergency situation.

The employees' wage had a raise of 32% on that year. One whole floor was closed - the indigent line, with 70 beds. In June 1960, Prudente threatened to close the doors of the Cancer Hospital if the federal funds already late were not sent in 90 days.

In 1962, the clinics were closed and restarted working by a last minute support once more. The newspapers greeted the reopening of the hospital.<sup>25</sup>

In the records of APCC meetings or annual reports in the 50's are registered the apparently prosaic initiatives to get money and to maintain the Cancer Hospital in operation. Strangely, one of the best equipped hospitals in the country, where the practice of medicine was always linked to teaching and research, survived mostly by donations and for volunteer act of the Women Network, the army of rose aprons created by Carmem Prudente.

It could seem strange, but it was not. After all, that is was the way Cancer Hospital was built. While Prudente fought the authorities, Carmem did everything possible to get money. The annual reports were orthodox: they enumerated exhibitions, fashion parades, protest marches, rodeos, bingos, beauty contests, bazaars, and balls. In 1954, the Campaign against Cancer, with exhibitions in São Paulo and Brasília and announcements in radio and TV, obtained Cr\$ 14,618,737.80 (or US\$ 1.7 million). The deficit of that year was of Cr\$ 13,120,312.00 (about US\$ 1,5 million).

One can see in the files of APCC meetings records of donations, as lands - nothing less than a hundred lots in Itanhaém, in the coast of São Paulo State, or of Senai initiative to repass

residues and surpluses of manufactured products to APCC. Sometimes, the Women Network had abrupt falls in donation - when the campaigns in radios and television suffered interruption, Carmem Prudente was kept away from the broadcasting. Already at that time, the smiling appearance of Carmem, live on black and white screens of TV Tupi, yielded hundreds of cruzeiros to the Cancer Hospital safes.

At the end of the 80's, the Women Network of the São Paulo Association for Combating Cancer had more than a thousand volunteers in the whole State. They had emblems that designated the time of rendered service. One year as a volunteer corresponded to a rosebud on the right sleeve of the pink apron. Every five years gave right to a star, and 25 years, to a big star.



**Figura 4** – President Juscelino Kubitschek visiting Cancer Hospital, with Professor Prudente

## THE DEATH OF PRUDENTE

In 1958, Antonio Prudente began to feel joint pains, mainly in the hands. It was rheumatoid arthritis, a disaster for a surgeon. In the beginning, still at dawn, before going to operate on his patients, he had massage done, at his apartment located at the Brigadeiro Luís Antônio Street, in São Paulo.

But soon he began to take corticoids-containing medicines to face the pain. He must have researched a lot about the disease. In an article published in June of 1959, he wrote: "(...) our ignorance referring to cancer is not as

absolute as intend by some. Other diseases etiology are even more obscure, as rheumatoid arthritis, and a huge group in similar situation as cancer (...) the origin of most of the morbid processes is still unknown."<sup>26</sup>

The arthritis wouldn't allow him to finish off the surgeries. Their assistants accomplished the sutures.

Soon later, Antonio spent one year out of combat, being submitted to suprarenal surgery. He had diabetes, stayed hospitalized in the Cancer Hospital. And the 190cm (6-foot 4-inch) big man began to circulate, in pajamas, by the hospital in a wheel chair.

In the beginning of the 60's, Carmem rushed with Prudente to the apartment in Flamengo that she had inherited from her father. He could not stand more pains and concerns with the hospital.

- I think I exaggerated, he would say about the corticoids.

Antonio Prudente died after a stroke in the dawn of September 17, 1965. His death served as a dividing line in the history of the Cancer Hospital: during the next two decades, his administration was given to entrepreneurs. As directors, up to 1990, Haroldo Levy, Humberto Monteiro Cunha, José Maria Homem of Montes, José Ermírio of Moraes Filho succeeded Prudente.<sup>14</sup>

In 1973, APCC had statute alterations and it became "Antonio Prudente" Foundation congregating the Cancer Hospital, the "Celestino Bourroul" School of Cancerology, "Haroldo Levy" Center of Studies and Basic Researches - these were the vertexes that orientated the medical care, teaching and research activities that were Prudente's struggle.

In the 70's, several changes in the structure of the Clinical Board and technological progresses on disease diagnoses and therapeutics turned the old Hospital facilities outdated. Initially, the doctors were distributed in three Services of Surgery, each one with its chief and titular, rendering indistinctly services to patients with tumors no matter where they were located. However, for therapeutic standardization and better treatment results, services were developed according to neoplasias topography. Later, those services were transformed into departments.<sup>14</sup>

The Foundation was forced to promote

new campaign for fundraising to build a new hospital, close to the old one. The new building was inaugurated on September 18, 1973, in the same month, in which eight years ago, Antonio Prudente had died. His wife Carmem remained unyielding ahead of Women Network until 1990, when she started presenting signs of Alzheimer's disease.

## **TIMES OF TRANSITION**

Nevertheless, the death of Prudente caused a deep scission in the before so united team. As a centralizing and charismatic person, Prudente had not left a substitute. The departments followed autonomous conducts and there was a keen dispute among surgeons of different specialties (according to the testimony of Luiz Paulo Kowalski, then resident of Cancer Hospital and current Director of the Department of Head and Neck).

To the doctors, it was already impossible to take care of everything: techniques became more and more detailed and complex; knowledge on more refined anatomical structures and means of diagnosis and treatment became more and more sophisticated. As Antonio Prudente predicted in 1934, it was more and more difficult for a generalist to treat a patient with cancer. Finally, in the 80's, the challenge was to consolidate the specialties and to launch new struggles with doctors and scientists on patient care and research.

In the eighties, there was an exponential increase of new chemotherapeutic drugs, which pointed out the success of the basic research to treat and to eliminate cancer. North American pharmaceutical companies were investing million of dollars in the chemotherapeutics production. In Brazil, basic research was crawling.<sup>27</sup>

## **BACK TO THE PATH**

In 1981, when the North American millionaire Daniel Keith Ludwig decided to invest millions of dollars in setting up the Brazilian branch of Ludwig Institute on Cancer Research, he had to include among the partnership possible options the Cancer Hospital, considered one of the largest health care centers on oncology in the country. The

correspondents of Ludwig consulted the director of the National Division of Cancer in the Ministry of Health: it was nobody less than the pathologist Humberto Torloni, that one day had raised a sack of money for the construction of the Cancer Hospital. Of course the institution seemed to be a natural candidate in Torloni's memory and heart. As for probable presidents, Torloni has interviewed six candidates to the position, in a type of pre-selection for the Ludwig Institute members. He made report about six candidates, with a little inclination favoring Ricardo Renzo Brentani, an Italian from Trieste, titular of the Oncology chair of the School of Medicine of University of São Paulo who had in his behalf a rich activity as scientist, according to the testimony of the physician Humberto Torloni, and current Director of the Research Center of Cancer Hospital.

The intuition, intelligence and charisma of two persons fundamental for the history of the Hospital had influence in this decision: Carmem Prudente and the surgeon Fernando Gentil. In 1983, aiming the partnership and trying everything to seduce the foreigners, they included Ricardo Brentani among the guests to dine with Ludwig Institute emissaries. Thus, they attracted to the Cancer Hospital one of the most prominent scientist to direct the Institute, according to the testimony of the physician Ricardo Renzo Brentani, current Director of the Cancer Hospital.

It has worked. The Ludwig Institute on Cancer Research occupies since 1983 two floors of the Cancer Hospital, with project and under the management of Ricardo Brentani. The shot of Carmem Prudente has yielded other fruits. In 1990, the entrepreneur José Ermírio de Moraes Filho invited Brentani to substitute him in the Cancer Hospital presidency. After 25 years from the Prudente's death, a physician and scientist manages the Hospital again. The strategy of Brentani ever since has been to gather the activities of the two institutions and to extend the vocation for the scientific research to the clinical board of the hospital.

However, before anything it was necessary to clean up the hospital finances, historically deficient. Since its creation, the Cancer Hospital assisted among 95% and 98% indigent and patient from old INAMPS, public healthcare system. Until the beginning of the

90's, the government delayed the consignment of values, leading the hospital to bankruptcy.

The found solution was service diversification. Contracts were signed with private health care cooperatives. Soon afterwards, it was provided negotiations with commercial agreements, what demanded a wide reform in the old social facilities of the hospital. The alteration in the public healthcare system, with the creation of the Unique System of Health (SUS) has helped the process of bills sanitation. In 2002, the Cancer Hospital assisted 200 groups of medical care. The donations and campaigns represent almost 15% of the income of the institution, according to information from physician Lourdes Aparecida Marques, Administrative and Finances Director of Cancer Hospital.

In 1997, Brentani gave a fundamental step towards his objective in establishing total synergy between the activities of the Cancer Hospital and Instituto Ludwig. It has obtained from the Ministry of Education and Culture the approval for a program of Masters degree in the Hospital. Today, the Graduation Program is recognized by governmental entities as one of the best in the country.<sup>28</sup> It counts with 20 research lines, that accompanies the evolution of the scientific knowledge, from descriptive works of the tumors anatomy and histology and their epidemiological aspects, developing fundamental contributions for the improvement of the patients' quality of life, and accomplishing great innovations in the disease clinical and surgical treatment.<sup>21</sup>

The two institutions still had enormous participation in a scientific project of world expression. In 1999, it has started the Cancer Genoma Project, inside of the Ludwig Institute, with financing of Fapesp. Thanks to this research, Brazil occupied, in 2001, the second largest contribution to Human Genoma, just behind USA, in one of the most competitive areas of the world science. In 2000, the Cancer Hospital was recognized by National Institutes of Health (USA) as the largest supplier of tumors samples of the Genoma Project. The Cancer Hospital contributed with 95% of the samples used as mRNA source.<sup>21</sup> Also in 2000, the Cancer Hospital was chosen by Fapesp as Center of Research, Innovation and Diffusion. In the same year, the American Association of Medicine

indicated the institution as World Center for Head and Neck Cancer Research. The Graduation Program ended up creating a team of MSs and PhDs that circulate along the Cancer Hospital corridors. The clinical board is composed of 240 doctors, part of which PhDs, and many of them are Associate Professors.

The Cancer Hospital today follows the destiny for which it was created, according to doctor Antonio Prudente's dream. It is a center of excellence in teaching, research and oncological treatment, although it has never stopped exerting on the ones that work there a strange enchantment. A feeling that the director of the Hospital, Ricardo Brentani, summarizes like this: "All those sheltered under this roof become prudentinos."

## NOTES

Every historical monetary values presented along the text were converted to US\$ based on May, 2005 values, using information of Banco Central do Brasil ([www.bcb.gov.br](http://www.bcb.gov.br)) and through the following methodology: i) initially the historical monetary values were corrected to R\$, at prices of May, 2005, through the IGP-DI/FGV index; R\$ values were converted to US\$ by the Exchange rate for commercial sale mean of May, 2005 = 2,4537 R\$/US\$.

Capes has conferred to the Oncology Graduation Program of Cancer Hospital grade 7, the best ever obtained by an institution in the area. The Capes evaluation goes from 1 to 7. One of the evaluation criteria is the quality and quantity of published articles

## REFERENCES

1. Coelho FRG. Câncer. Manual de orientação para pacientes e interessados. 2ª ed. São Paulo: Robe Editorial, 2000.
2. Prudente A. "O problema do Câncer I - Generalidades e Definição". Estado de São Paulo. 1933 out 13. (sexta-feira). (assinado em 04/09/1933). Fl. 06. Código 01.04.026 (01 set-31 out) (microfilme).
3. Schneider CAR. Histórico da Fundação Antônio Prudente. Acta Oncol Bras 1989; 9:7-11.
4. von Franz Keysser LF. Die Elektrochirurgie" Medizinische Buchhandlung. Baken Library and Museum; 1931.
5. Maurano F. História da lepra em São Paulo. Rev Tribunais 1939; 2 vols.
6. Seabra F. História e origem da Fundação Antônio Prudente e do Instituto Central - Hospital Antônio Cândido Camargo. Acta Oncol Bras 1984; 4:28-30.
7. Flores FM. Antônio Prudente de Moraes. MB2A - nº19.
8. Donato H. Celestino Bourroul - Santo Leigo. São Paulo: Nova Bandeira Produções Editoriais; 2002.
9. Anuario do Gymnasio de S. Bento em São Paulo, 17.

- 1919.
10. Hora H. Informativo dos Funcionários do Hospital do Câncer (São Paulo). 2001; (9):1.
  11. Rede Feminina surgiu 7 anos antes do hospital. *Rev Câncer* 1998; 2:27.
  12. Anuário do Câncer. Rede Feminina de Combate ao Câncer. Meio século de solidariedade. São Paulo: Edmetec Edições Médicas; 1996; (Edição Especial-2):14-33.
  13. [FAP] Fundação Antônio Prudente. Relatório Anual da Associação Paulista de Combate ao Câncer. São Paulo: FAP; 1946.
  14. Mirra AP. Hospital A. C. Camargo da Fundação Antônio Prudente: histórico. *Acta Oncol Bras* 1993; 1-3:5-7.
  15. Anuário do Câncer. O maior especialista em câncer do Brasil. São Paulo: Edmetec Edições Médicas; 1996; (Edição Especial-2):38-51.
  16. Pereira AJ, Novaes PERS. A radioterapia do Hospital do Câncer A C. Camargo: passado, presente e futuro. In: Pinto ACLC, editor. *A radioterapia no Brasil 2000*. Belo Horizonte: Artes Gráficas Formato; 2000. p.111-4.
  17. Logulo ÂF, Sredni ST. Diagnóstico em patologia. In: Brentani MM, Coelho FRG, Iyeyasu H, Kowalski LP, editores. *Bases da oncologia*. São Paulo: Lemar-Livraria e Editora Marina; 1998. p.203-25.
  18. Motta NW. Formação em radioterapia no Brasil. In: Pinto ACLC, editor. *A radioterapia no Brasil 2000*. Belo Horizonte: Artes Gráficas Formato, 2000. p.105-6.
  19. Lopes A. Síntese histórica da residência médica do Hospital A. C. Camargo. *Acta Oncol Bras* 1985; 5:52.
  20. Abrão A, Silva JB. Estudo anatômico da cadeia ganglionar mamária interna em 100 casos. *Rev Paul Med* 1954; 45:317-26.
  21. [FAP] Fundação Antonio Prudente. Meio Século de Pesquisa em Câncer: a Parceria Hospital do Câncer e Instituto Ludwig. São Paulo: Comunique; 2003. p.38.
  22. [FAP] Fundação Antônio Prudente. Relatório Anual da Associação Paulista de Combate ao Câncer. São Paulo: FAP; 1954.
  23. Freitas O. Carnaval no Pacaembu. O Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, fev. 1954.
  24. Hospital do Câncer festeja 20 anos com 3 solenidades. O Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, 25 abr. 1973.