

History of the fight against cancer in Lima, 1918-1941

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This project seeks to identify and analyze the actions origins and development of public authorities, as well as conceptions, practices and interests of physicians regarding the fight against cancer in the city of Lima between 1918 and 1941.

The research project is still in process although a first survey of sources was completed. Three historical periods have been identified so far.

-First period (1918-1922). Creation of the Permanent Commission for the Control of Cancer by Juan José Mostajo Vargas (Peruvian physician.) The Commission established the first public health initiative in Peru against cancer and was a space used by physicians who wished to be specialists in Radiology. As a result, the Institute of Radiology was created and the Radiology course was included in the School of Medicine at *Universidad Nacional de San Marcos*. The Commission was responsible for disseminating information about early cancer diagnosis and treatment, creating health facilities for treatment and battling against herbalists, traditional healers and midwives.

-Second period (1922-1926). The Government of Augusto B. Leguía instructs Dr. Mostajo to travel abroad to collect information and experiences on the organization and progress of the fight against cancer. Visiting Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, United States, etc, enabled him to establish a contacts network with leading medical specialists such as Pouey, Ángel Roffo, F. Blumenthal, J. A. Murray, Marie Curie and the wise French physician Claudio Regaud.

-Third period (1926-1941). After his return to Lima, Mostajo creates, in 1926, the Peruvian Cancer League, the second of this type in South America. The Peruvian Cancer League which had a philanthropic nature became a distinctive symbol and fulfilled three major activities: fighting spiels, providing medical care to patients and monitoring statistics and results of the treatment and curing cancer patients.

The study concluded in 1941. That year, the Government decreed the demise of the Peruvian Cancer League and the creation of the Peruvian Cancer Institute (INEN), institution that finally centralized the fight against this disease from the second half of the 20th century.