

JOSE F. FABELLA
(1888-1945)

Public Health Advocate

Jose F. Fabella spent the best years of his life working for the protection and the promotion of public health, particularly the youth.

Born to Juan Fabella and Damiana Fernandez on October 26, 1888 in Pagsanjan, Laguna, he finished his elementary education at his province. He had his secondary schooling at the Ateneo de Manila, and then enrolled at the Philippine Normal College for his pre-medicine course. He went to the United States and studied at Rush Medical College, University of Chicago, where he earned his medical degree in 1912.

In 1914 he took postgraduate courses in children's diseases at Charite Krankenhaus in Berlin, Germany and at the New York Post Graduate Medical School in 1920.

He worked as an intern and, later, as resident physician, at the Children's Free Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1912-1913. On his return to the Philippines, he was appointed secretary of the Anti-Tuberculosis Society, 1914-1916. He also served as secretary, and later as director, of the Public Welfare Board, 1916-1921.

Dr. Fabella served as a member of the Philippine Board of Censorship for Motion Pictures and the Tuberculosis Commission, and as first vice-president of the P.I. Anti-Tuberculosis Society, director of the P.I. Anti-Leprosy Society, vice-president of the Associated Charities, and councilor of La Proteccion de la Infancia.

In recognition of his signal contributions to public health and welfare he was appointed delegate to the Second Oriental Conference of the League or Red Cross Societies held in Tokyo, Japan in 1926. In 1927, he represented the Philippine government at the Seventh Congress of Tropical Medicine held in Calcutta, India. When the International Tuberculosis Congress was held in Oslo, Norway in 1930, he was there representing both the government of the Philippines and P.I. Tuberculosis Society.

In the fight against widespread infant mortality, he initiated the establishment of puericulture centers and maternity clinics in key areas of the country. Along this line, he identified himself and closed ranks with different health organizations to initiate various public welfare activities throughout the Islands.

A well-known biographer gave this account of his achievements:

"An international figure in the broad humanitarian field of social services, work, correction of juvenile delinquency, Dr. Fabella has devoted a great deal of his professional career as a physician to the advancement of these agencies. Largely through his efforts, social work was recognized as a profession in the Philippines and modern methods were introduced. He led the movement for reforms in the treatment of minor delinquents both in institution and in court, including the introduction of Probation works among minors in 1924. With the support of Secretary of Justice Jose Abad Santos, Dr. Fabella secured a site for the construction of the *Welfareville*, Manila's world famous children's village."

Dr. Fabella was a member of the Wack-Wack Golf Club, Philippine Columbian Association, and the *Colegio Medico-Farmacéutico*.

He was married to the former Esperanza Barcelo of Jaro, Iloilo, by whom he had six children: Jose Jr., Juan, Esperanza, Evelyn, Jaime, and Erlinda.

He died on January 16, 1945.

References:

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