

JACOBO P. FAJARDO
(1876-?)

Public Health Pioneer

Distinguished physician and surgeon, Dr. Jacobo Fajardo was the director of the Bureau of Health (now Department of Health) during the American colonial period.

He was born to Justino Fajardo and Andrea Puno in Bacolor, Pampanga on July 25, 1876. He completed his bachelor of arts degree at the Colegio San Juan de Letran in 1891.

While still a medical student, he married Antonia Jacinto of Manila on July 30, 1900. In 1902, he joined the government health service, while he was still a student.

Married and working, he pursued his studies, completing his doctor of medicine degree at the University of Santo Tomas in 1906. Afterwards, he served as President of the municipal board of health in Arayat, Pampanga.

Known as a hard – working health worker, he was urged by the people of the town to run for the post of deputy in the Philippines Assembly, which he handily won in 1909.

While serving as a legislator, he authored a bill, later to become known as the Fajardo Bill, which served as the foundation for the massive organization and efficient administration of public health services in various provinces and municipalities in the country.

When his tenure as deputy in the Philippine Assembly ended in 1912, he stayed on in the government service as district health officer. He was assigned first in Negros Oriental and, later, in Pangasinan. Then, he was sent to Mindanao, where he remained until 1921.

In Mindanao, Dr. Fajardo pioneered in the organization of public health centers. He also established infirmaries and opened health classes for government personnel as part of his public health awareness program on the island.

Fajardo was the first Filipino physician to receive a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. The grant gave him the opportunity to travel extensively in the United States and Europe as part of his research and study on public health problems. He was also the country's representative to the annual convention of American Public Health Association held at Minneapolis, and to the convention of the Southern Islands Medical Association at Miami, Florida, in 1929.

In 1921, he was promoted as chief of the division of provincial sanitation in Manila. In 1924, he was appointed director of health.

As health director, he made frequent inspections of health units throughout the country in order to give impetus to his fight against the ravages of the disease common in the Philippines. Thus, he earned the distinction as the country's "pioneer in public health work."

Jacobo and Antonia had five children namely: Demetrio, Angelina, Abelardo, Paz and Corazon.

References:

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