

## The Asia Pacific Clinical Nutrition Society 1994 Award



### SOEMILAH SASTROAMIDJOJO

Professor Soemilah Sastroamidjojo who holds the chair of Nutrition in the SEAMEO-TROPMED (South East Asian Ministers of Education – Tropical Medicine) Regional Centre on Community Nutrition, Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia, has devoted her life to attracting Southeast Asian professionals to a career in nutrition. She was born in Bandung, Indonesia on 17 April 1934. Her medical degree was obtained from the University of Indonesia in 1960, following which she developed a professional commitment to nutritional haematology and epidemiology.

Soemilah, as she is known to her friends, was one of the founders of the SEAMEO-TROPMED training programme at the University of Indonesia. The Centre in Jakarta started with a Diploma Programme that has provided training and research in Nutrition since 1970. A total of 418 students from Southeast Asia have participated in the SEAMEO-TROPMED Diploma Programme (146 from Indonesia, 87 from Malaysia, 81 from Thailand, 82 from the Philippines, 12 from Vietnam and 9 from other Southeast Asian countries). Most of these participants have been medical doctors (120) and nutritionists (114). A further 55 public health professionals and 32 nutrition-related professionals have participated in the Diploma course. In 1977, a Master of Science Programme was introduced and 91 students from the SEAMEO member countries have participated in this programme.

Through these training programmes Professor Soemilah has been able to provide significant opportunities in academic nutrition for Southeast Asian professionals. Since 1990, a Doctorate Programme has been underway in the SEAMEO-TROPMED Centre that has attracted 16 students from prominent academic or governmental posts.

Building bridges of understanding, and participation in international nutrition, has been part of the Centre's history. Those who have attended the training programme have seen these bridges built. The SEAMEO-TROPMED Centre has not only strengthened South-South cooperation within Asia but also South-North cooperation. Australia and Australian nutrition scientists like Professor Mark Wahlqvist, Margaret

Gilliland and Professor Peter Heywood made early linkages with Soemilah Sastroamidjojo. With the Field Research Programme, the Centre opened up the world of community nutrition for students from industrialized countries, including a total of 37 European students who came from the German universities of Bonn, Giessen, Kiel and Munich; the Dutch universities of Wageningen and Nijmegen and a Norwegian student from the University of Oslo. Although the primary focus is training access for Southeast Asian students and professionals, aspiring students from other countries have been welcome.

The development of a strong and lasting SEAMEO-TROPMED Centre has had benefits for collaborating institutions. The Centre's activities focus on providing assistance to the Collaborative Centres in Community Nutrition (CCCN) particularly as the Centre's policy is to support institutions through individuals. In 1992 two CCCNs were established in Indonesia: Padang in West Sumatra and Ujung Pandang in South Sulawesi. In 1994 a third Collaborative Centre was established in Vietnam by an agreement with the National Institute of Nutrition in Hanoi, whose director is Professor Ha Huy Khoi.

The nomination of Professor Soemilah for the award of the Asia Pacific Clinical Nutrition Society reflects her services of human resource development in the field of nutrition in Southeast Asia and the development of understanding between its peoples. The story of the SEAMEO-TROPMED Centre in Community Nutrition has been a modern-day success story in institution building. Professor Soemilah's public service in nutrition has been the promotion of international nutrition by means of her own experience in it. She has identified Southeast Asian professionals and scientists with talent and promise and facilitated their involvement in professional and academic careers in Clinical and Public Health Nutrition.



Rainer Gross  
Secretary, APCNS Selection Committee  
Jakarta, 1994