

Volume 42, No 12

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DECEMBER 2021

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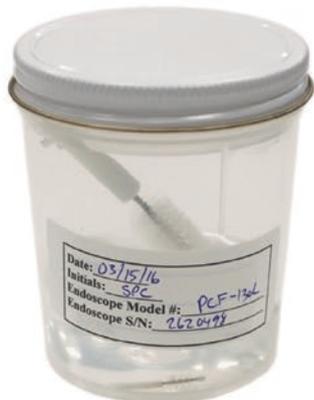
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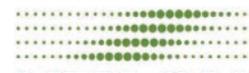
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## About the cover:



Starting in 2015, the cover format of each volume of *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology* will be changed in order to honor one of the many professionals throughout history who not only recognized how disease might be spread, but also how those principles could be applied to reduce healthcare associated infections.

Wu Lien-teh, M.D., MPH was born Gnoh Lean Tuck in Malaysia in 1879. His father, who was Chinese, immigrated to Penang to work as a goldsmith. In 1896, Wu won the Queen's Scholarship allowing him to enroll at Emmanuel College in Cambridge University. After training at St. Mary's Hospital in London, Wu pursued research at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, the Pasteur Institute, and the Bacteriological Institute of Halle in the fields of bacteriology, malaria, and tetanus. By the age of 24, Dr. Wu was the first student of Chinese descent to graduate from Cambridge with a medical degree.

Dr. Wu returned to Malaysia in 1903, to find that there were no posts in the Medical Service for non-British specialists. After a brief time studying beri-beri, he returned to Penang to establish a medical practice. He advocated for the abolition of gambling, spirits and opium which impacted local government coffers. Wu soon found himself to be in possession of an ounce of opium for which he was prosecuted. In 1907, Wu left Malaysia to accept an invitation to serve as the Vice-Director of Imperial Army Medical College in Tientsin, China.

In 1910, an outbreak of a rapidly fatal respiratory disease occurred in the Chinese-Russian town of Harbin in Manchuria. The outbreak began amongst 10,000 hunters who stayed in crowded inns; they sought marmots for their pelts which, when appropriately dyed, could pass for sable. Wu, being conversant in French and German, was dispatched to work with foreign medical officers. No one had seen pneumonic plague in recent memory, but Dr. Wu strongly suspected the diagnosis and had to overcome Chinese prohibitions against performing postmortems to prove it. With his direction, travel was restricted, plague hospitals were built and the symptomatic isolated, their homes were disinfected, and asymptomatic contacts were identified and quarantined in freight cars. Bodies that could not be buried in the frozen soil were cremated contrary to the teachings of Confucianism. Everyone was encouraged to wear anti-plague masks, the forerunner of the N95 mask. One senior physician who notably refused to wear a mask died of the disease. By the Lunar New Year in 1911, the outbreak had ceased; 60,000 inhabitants had died.

Dr. Wu was nominated for the Nobel Prize for his work as a plague fighter; he directed the National Quarantine Service and was the first president of the China Medical Society. He also championed the modernization of Chinese Medical and Public Health Systems. After the Japanese occupation of China in 1937, he returned to Malaysia where he practiced medicine until retirement at the age of 80. Dr. Wu Lien-teh died on January 20, 1960 following a stroke.

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Cover image: The Wu Lien Teh Memorial Museum in Harbin, China (<https://wulienteh.com/1453/dr-wu-lien-teh-memorial-museum/>).