

I.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF VITAL BRAZIL

Vital Brazil Mineiro da Campanha was born on April 28, 1865 in Campanha, State of Minas Gerais. He studied at the Faculty of Medicine in Rio de Janeiro from 1886-1891, and received his doctor's degree based on a thesis on "The function of the spleen".

As sanitary inspector of the Public Health Service in the State of São Paulo, he organized campaigns against typhoid fever, plague, smallpox, diphtheria, cholera-morbus and mainly tetanus, from 1893-1895.

From 1895-1897 he practiced medicine in Botucatu and performed his first experiments with the venoms of poisonous snakes, principally rattlesnakes and jararacas.

From 1897-1900 he became a member of the Instituto Bacteriológico in São Paulo, directed by Adolpho Lutz, where besides his bacteriological studies, he succeeded in immunizing dogs and goats against rattlesnake and jararaca venom, and experimentally prepared an anti-venom sera. On November 8, 1899 he was made head of the State laboratories at the Butantan Farm, in order to prepare sera against the plague. Finally the Instituto Serumtherapico was officially inaugurated under the direction of Vital Brazil, in the farm, on February 23, 1901.

Following his retirement in 1919, he established the Instituto Vital Brazil in Niterói, returning in 1924 to the Instituto where he commissioned as Director until 1927.

On May 8, 1950 he died in Rio de Janeiro, 85 years old.

Vital Brazil was an excellent organizer, an exceptional and well-known researcher. He surrounded himself with a well-chosen staff and planned guiding principles for the Instituto. Together with the Federal Government he worked out the free transportation system of poisonous snakes. In 1914 he obtained, from the State Government the permission to erect new buildings, which are used up to present.

Some hundred original papers, monographs and lectures on his research work were published.

As the first one he proved the specificity of the anti-venom sera; observed the parcial immunization against jararaca venom by immunization through the yellow fever virus; he made intense studies on immunology, improved the methods for venom and serum dosage; discovered that serum, even expired, may and should be used, however in higher than prescribed doses.