Carlos J. Finlay: Cuban scientist with a fruitful life dedicated to humanity

Havana, August 20 (RHC)-- After a fruitful life dedicated to research and epidemiology, Cuban scientist Carlos Juan Finlay died on a day like today in 1915.

Finlay, a medical epidemiologist, discovered the transmitting agent of yellow fever, although he was unfairly described as the mosquito's doctor, as he did not find many that believed his theory, which was first put forward on February 18, 1881, at the International Health Congress.

There, he expressed his revolutionary hypothesis about the contagion of yellow fever by a biological vector, with the identification of the female Aedes aegypti mosquito as the subject transmitting the germ from a sick individual to a healthy one.

This completed his brilliant discovery, which showed the world a new way of contracting epidemic diseases through an intermediate agent, but it was not until 20 years later that his sanitation program was implemented to eliminate areas that might allow the vector to reproduce.

Its hygiene recommendations led to the eradication of yellow fever in Panama, Rio de Janeiro, Veracruz, New Orleans and other parts of the Western Hemisphere, where repeated outbreaks claimed an incalculable number of lives.

Today, the world recognizes him as the absolute discoverer of the agent that transmits yellow fever, a finding that broke the prevailing conceptions in that sphere of medicine, according to which illnesses could only be spread by direct contact between people or due to the influence of an environmental factor.

Finlay was nominated seven times for the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, an award he never received, because his work is the fundamental principle of modern epidemiology and his studies are active and serve as guidelines for the fight against other vector-borne diseases.

Today his name identifies one of the most prestigious Cuban scientific centers, the Finlay Vaccine Institute, dedicated to the research and production of human vaccines and whose services are aimed at preserving health, combating diseases and prolonging life expectancy of humanity, which has earned him international recognition.

105 years after the death of its inspirer, this institution is at the forefront of the biotechnology and medical-pharmaceutical industry worldwide, which has led to the development of, among others, meningococcal, trivalent antileptosporidic, antithymphoid and anti-tetanus vaccines.

Its most recent proposal, "Soberana 01," is a vaccine candidate that will begin the first stage of clinical trials as a prophylactic drug on Monday, August 24th.

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