

SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

INSTITUTE OF EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE FOR THE STUDY AND TREATMENT OF CANCER

Director: Dr. A. H. ROFFO

Buenos Aires, Argentina

[EDITORIAL NOTE.—This is one of a series of articles describing the principal scientific institutions in Latin America. These articles have been prepared with the cooperation of the heads of the organizations concerned.]

The Institute of Experimental Medicine for the Study and Treatment of Cancer was inaugurated November 7, 1923, and is part of the University of Buenos Aires.

Under the leadership of its Director, Professor A. H. Roffo, the Institute has been developed to cover every phase of cancer research—including social welfare as well as scientific experimentation. The activities of the biologist, the chemist, the physicist, the microbiologist, the pathologist, and the physician are thus all brought to bear on the problem.

The Institute, which began with a single building, now has twelve, and occupies about twelve and a half acres. Its annual budget includes a fixed appropriation of 260,000.00 pesos argentinos (about \$78,550), with additional grants and donations.

The organization of the Institute is on a three-fold basis: (1) medical research, (2) medical care (diagnosis and treatment), and (3) social work.

The Division of Medical (or Scientific) Research includes: experimental cancer; bio-chemistry; physical chemistry; experimental pathology; tissue culture; radio-biology; pathologic anatomy; experimental surgery. While research is directed chiefly to the study of malignant tumors, other diseases of obscure etiology are not neglected. Promising new findings on etiology and treatment of cancer are investigated by the Institute, and its laboratories are open to workers in this field, so long as they abide by the rules of the Institute. Accounts of all work carried on in the Institute are published in its Bulletin, the *Boletín del Instituto de Medicina Experimental para el estudio y tratamiento del cáncer*.

The Division of Medical Care or Relief includes a dispensary for the early diagnosis and outpatient treatment of cancer; and hospitalization facilities. To date, 82,000 persons have been registered in the dispensary. The clinics, at the disposal of the public as well as physi-

cians, are open every day. After a first examination in the general clinic, the patient is seen by a specialist on the site of the disease—throat, skin, digestive system, etc. Following a very complete examination, the patient is asked to return in 48 hours for definite diagnosis and treatment. The latter may consist in electro-surgery, deep radiotherapy, ultra-deep radio-therapy, radium, and other measures. The annual number of patients has risen from 1,772 in 1923 to 8,554 in 1938; the number of consultations from 6,767 to 91,752, and the number of treatments from 3,900 to 50,279, a total of 354,000 treatments to date.

There are three pavilions devoted to the hospitalization of patients, with a total of 600 beds. In 1923, 422 persons were hospitalized, and in 1938, 3,174, a total of 27,599.

Social welfare work is carried on by the Institute, not only by furnishing care to every patient coming to the Institute, whatever his social condition, but also by public education through leaflets and lectures. A cancer hour is held every Saturday, which cultural groups, schools, etc., may attend. A visiting nurse service has been established; the nurse visits the home of the patient, and is able in many instances to see that the patients, especially women patients, are not taken from their home duties. Thus a mother may continue her usual life, maintaining contact with the Institute through the visiting nurse, who will keep track of her condition, and tell her when to come to the clinic.

The Institute operates a School of Nursing, and also gives courses in Cancerology. Physicians are allowed to attend the clinics held in the dispensary.

The personnel of the Institute includes three resident physicians, six ward physicians, one medical radiologist, one radiobiologist, one biochemist, one physical chemist, one hematologist, four assistants; nurses, and clerical personnel.

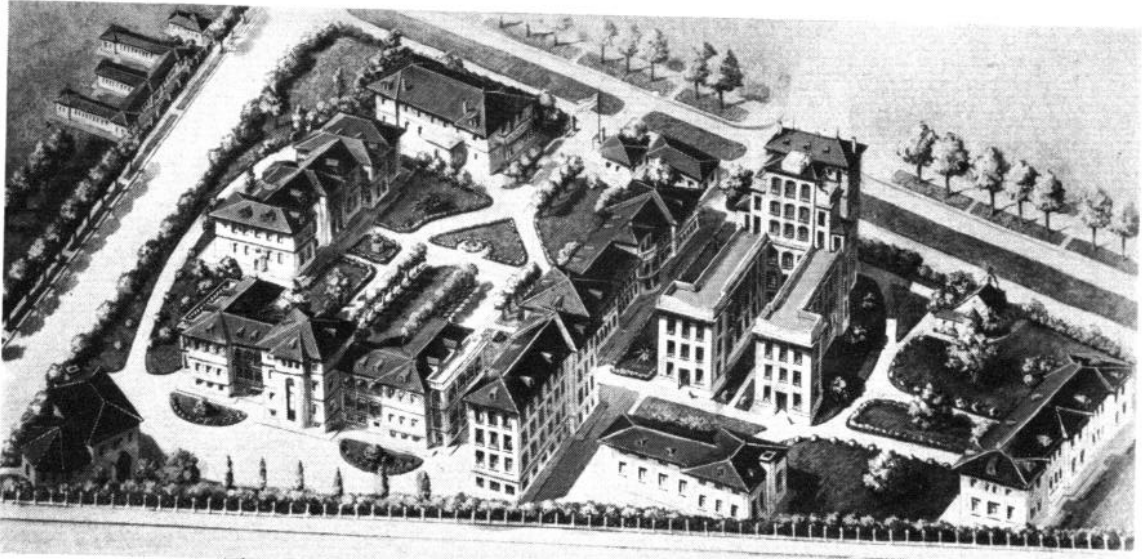


FIG. 1.—Air view of the Buenos Aires Institute of Experimental Medicine.

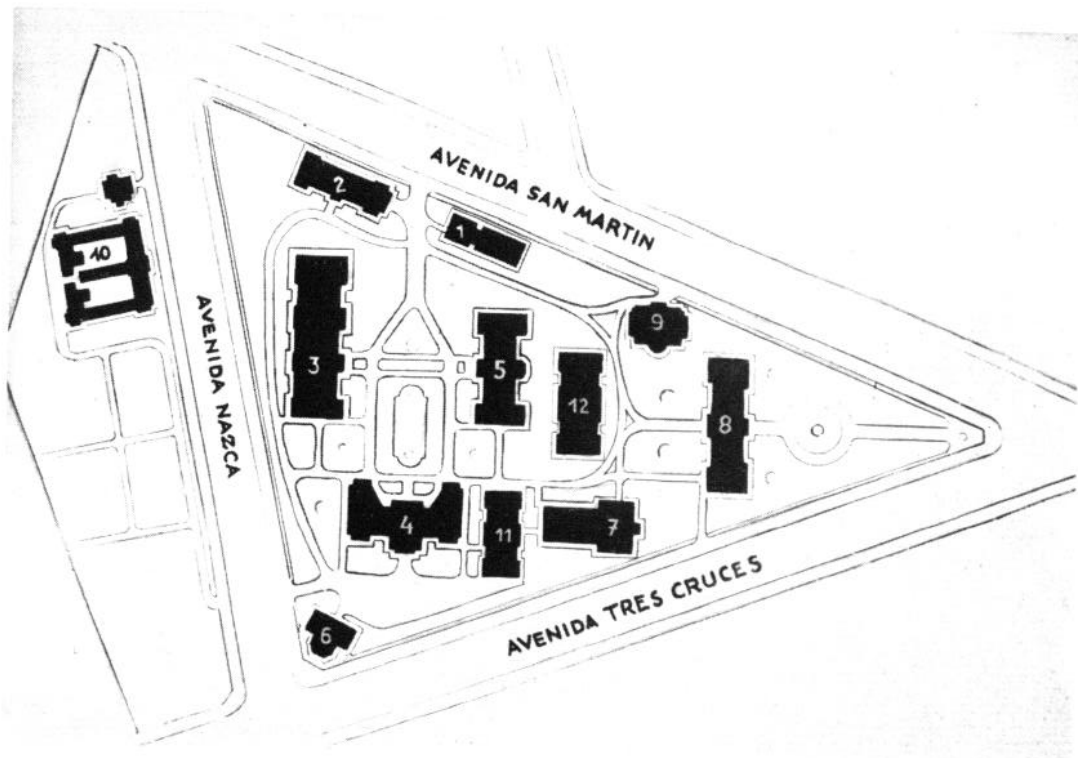


FIG. 2.—Plan of the Institute: 1. Records of patients, administration. 2. Out-patient dispensary. 3. "Em. Costa" scientific research building. Radiology and deep and ultra-deep radiotherapy section. 4. "Elena Laroque de Roffo" 100-bed building. 5. Hospital, 100 beds. 6. Morgue, laundry, rat breeding. 7. Kitchen. 8. Nurses' home. 9. Chapel. 10. Animal home. 11. Dr. Luis Costa hospital, 100 beds. 12. Model hospital, 250 beds.



FIG. 3.—View of the "Elena Laroque de Roffo" hospital for men. This was the only building in existence at the inauguration of the Institute in 1923.



FIG. 4.—"Emilio J. Costa" building for scientific research.