

FMRP – A History of Success

In the late 1940's, the State of São Paulo was in need of good universities, and especially of the high quality assistance that they could provide to the population.

In the city of Ribeirão Preto, the great need – widely discussed by the local media and defended by the most important people in town – was for health care, which could be fulfilled by the settlement of a medical school.

The Common Council of Ribeirão Preto and those of many other cities, including some in the states of Minas Gerais and Goiás, made known to the government of the State of São Paulo the desire of establishing the new school. These manifestations arose from the necessity of the surrounding population and also from the interest of turning Ribeirão Preto into a more diversified center, not depending only on agriculture.

These requests to the government brought together many other petitions for the expansion of the University of São Paulo (USP), which would spread culture, different kinds of aid and quality graduation courses throughout the state. This strong political pressure was brought several times to the University Council that decided to accomplish the expansion.

Bauru was the other city that could eventually house the new medical school. However, Ribeirão was chosen because it offered, at that time, a more culturally developed environment, result of the wealth brought by the coffee plantations. Afterwards, a 1948 law by decree determined the foundation of the Medical School of Ribeirão Preto (Faculdade de Medicina de Ribeirão Preto – FMRP). At the same time, the city of São Carlos was chosen to house a school of engineering, also affiliated to USP.

To evaluate the proposal, a committee of professors from the Medical School of São Paulo was sent to the city to certify that the necessary conditions to initiate the establishment of the medical school existed. The Hospitals Santa Casa de Misericórdia, São Francisco, and Beneficência Portuguesa, along with Sinhá Junqueira Maternity offered immediate help so that the proposal could be promptly approved. The incipient private School of Dentistry and Pharmacy (Faculdade de Odontologia e FARMACIA) that already existed in Ribeirão Preto offered its structure for practical classes. Later, this school joined USP.

The committee approved the establishment of the Medical School without any restrictions, and all of the positive experiences accomplished in São Paulo since 1924 were used as a model for the new school's curriculum. The only problem was the inappropriate place that would host the school.

The arrival of the medical school demanded the establishment of a nursing school, and the consequence was the settlement of the Nursing School of Ribeirão Preto (Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirão Preto).

The new medical school started to function in an old downtown house, located near the Cathedral, on a street called Visconde de Inhaúma. There, the administrative section was installed and the first classes took place, except for the inaugural class, which was held at the São Jorge Movie Theater, on May 17th, 1952.

The "legend" that is told at the school – that the first classes took place in the basement of that old house – is true, but it did not last long. Soon, the public school Otoniel Mota and the Medical Center of Ribeirão Preto offered their facilities for the classes to take place.

Zeferino Vaz, the first dean of the Medical School, had the idea of using the building of the former School of Practical Agriculture “Getúlio Vargas” (Escola Prática de Agricultura “Getúlio Vargas” – EPA). This institute, founded by Fernando Costa, had been inactivated some time before. Nevertheless, the building was extremely well preserved and was ready to be used. It was a great opportunity for the acquisition of a permanent place to host the school, in the middle of a coffee plantation, on a farm named Monte Alegre. Presently, the former EPA building is the Main Building (Prédio Central) of the Medical School. The last farm owner, Francisco Schmidt, was a German immigrant who could barely write his name. In spite of this, he became a respected businessman and the richest landowner in Ribeirão Preto. At the time of his death, the government expropriated the land from the heir Jacob, so that EPA could start to function.

Nowadays, FMRP is located on a campus not far away from the center of the city, in a privileged environment, in contact with nature. It is also considered to be a cultural melting pot because of the different origins of many professors, who arrived in search of new partnerships, opportunities, and even because of academic idealism and research work.

The first University Hospital, located downtown, was donated to the State of São Paulo by Sinhá Junqueira. Currently, it remains as the Emergency Unit, where students still attend part of their classes. The new Hospital was built on the campus in 1978, and it is worth mentioning the strong actuation of the students in this process through the Rocha Lima Student Union (Centro Acadêmico “Rocha Lima”). The Center of Legal Medicine (Centro de Medicina Legal), the Blood Center (Hemocentro), the Family Health Units and other health care centers complete the structure of FMRP.

Always achieving progress in its 50-year existence, FMRP-USP has been fascinating those who have been in contact with it, due to its own history and others it has been helping to make over the years.