

CHAPTER 1

Formative Years





The practice of Ophthalmology in the Philippines dates back to the Spanish times when the University of Santo Tomas (UST), established in 1611, opened a medical and pharmacy school in 1871. Ophthalmology was said to have been part of the fourth-year medical school curriculum until it was discontinued in 1899. There are, however, no records to show whether the teachers of the subject were ophthalmologists.

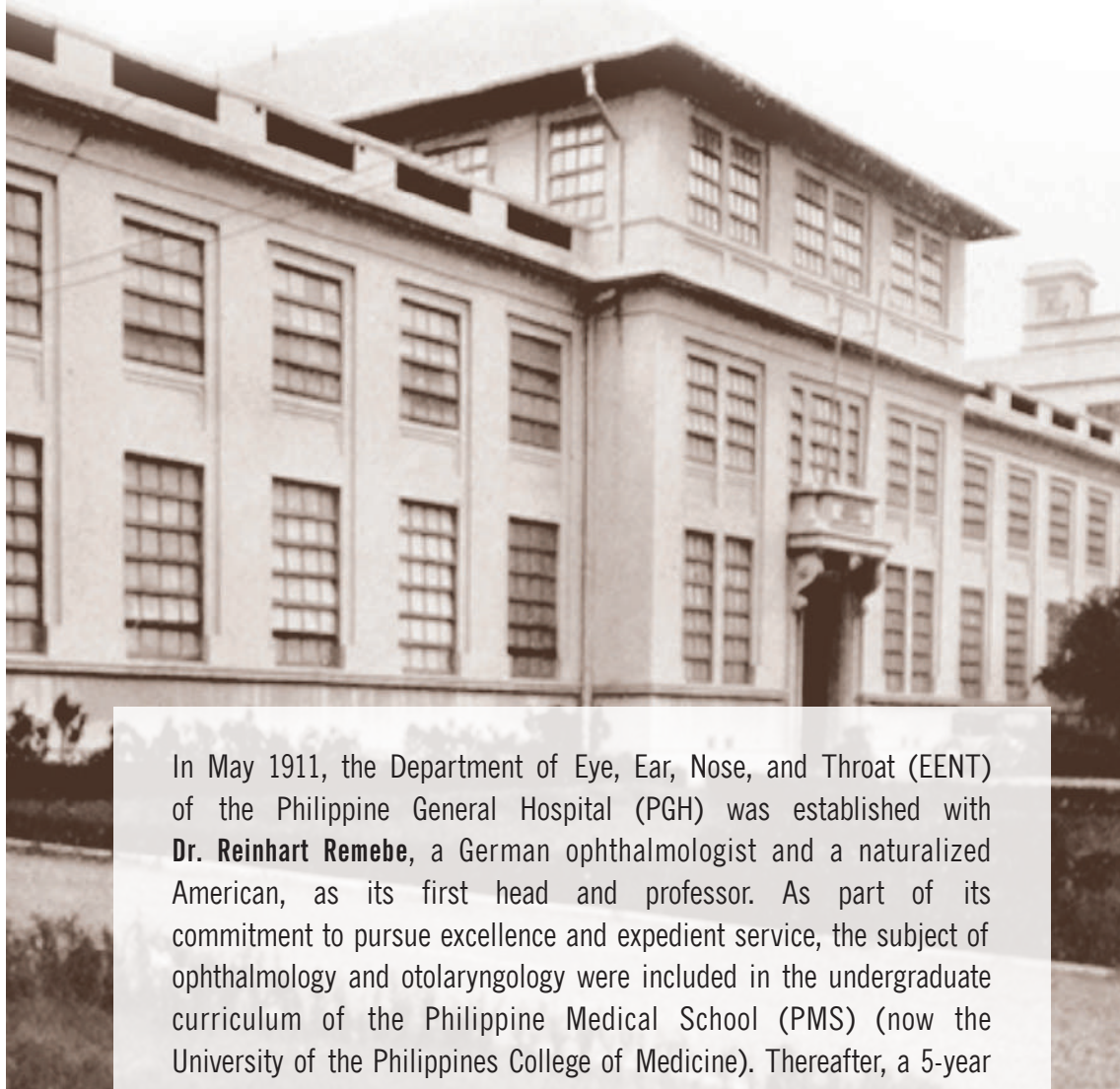
Ophthalmology then was recorded to have been already practiced as a distinct specialty from general surgery and among those who trained in the field were **Dr. Joaquin Gonzalez-Lopez**, the first Filipino ophthalmic surgeon (ca. 1878) and Philippine national hero, **Dr. Jose P. Rizal** (1885). Both of them pursued further training in ophthalmology at different times in Paris under the tutelage of the same mentor, Prof. Louis de Wecker.

In later years, records show that in 1906, upon the return of **Dr. Severino Alberto, Sr.** from a two-year study program in ophthalmology at the University of Paris, the UST College of Medicine and Surgery separated Ophthalmology from the Department of Surgery, with him as its founding chairman. At this same time, he established the first out-patient service facility for eye diseases at the Ospital San Juan de Dios in Intramuros – then the teaching hospital of UST.

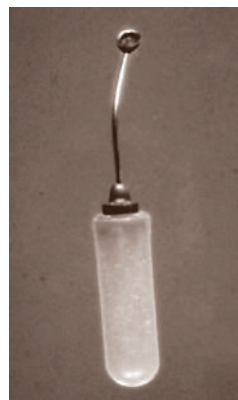
The American Colonial Influence

The American occupation changed the policy directions in eye care for an expedient administrative arrangement. It thus came to be “...that the teaching and practice of ophthalmology with otolaryngology became an American creation in the Philippines. The foreign physicians who arrived with the American occupation forces were trained to handle both medical specialties.” It became the vogue or new norm of the medical specialty tradition. “Even the practicing Filipino ophthalmologist, Dr. Severino Alberto Sr., had to go back to Europe in 1912 to train in otolaryngology. On his return in 1914, UST reorganized its medical school’s eye department to include ear, nose, and throat, with him as professor and head until 1946.”

In 1907, two years after a special act of the American colonial government in December 1905, the Philippine Medical School (PMS) was established together with the School of Nursing. These two schools and the Philippine General Hospital (PGH), which was established earlier, became part of the University of the Philippines in 1910.

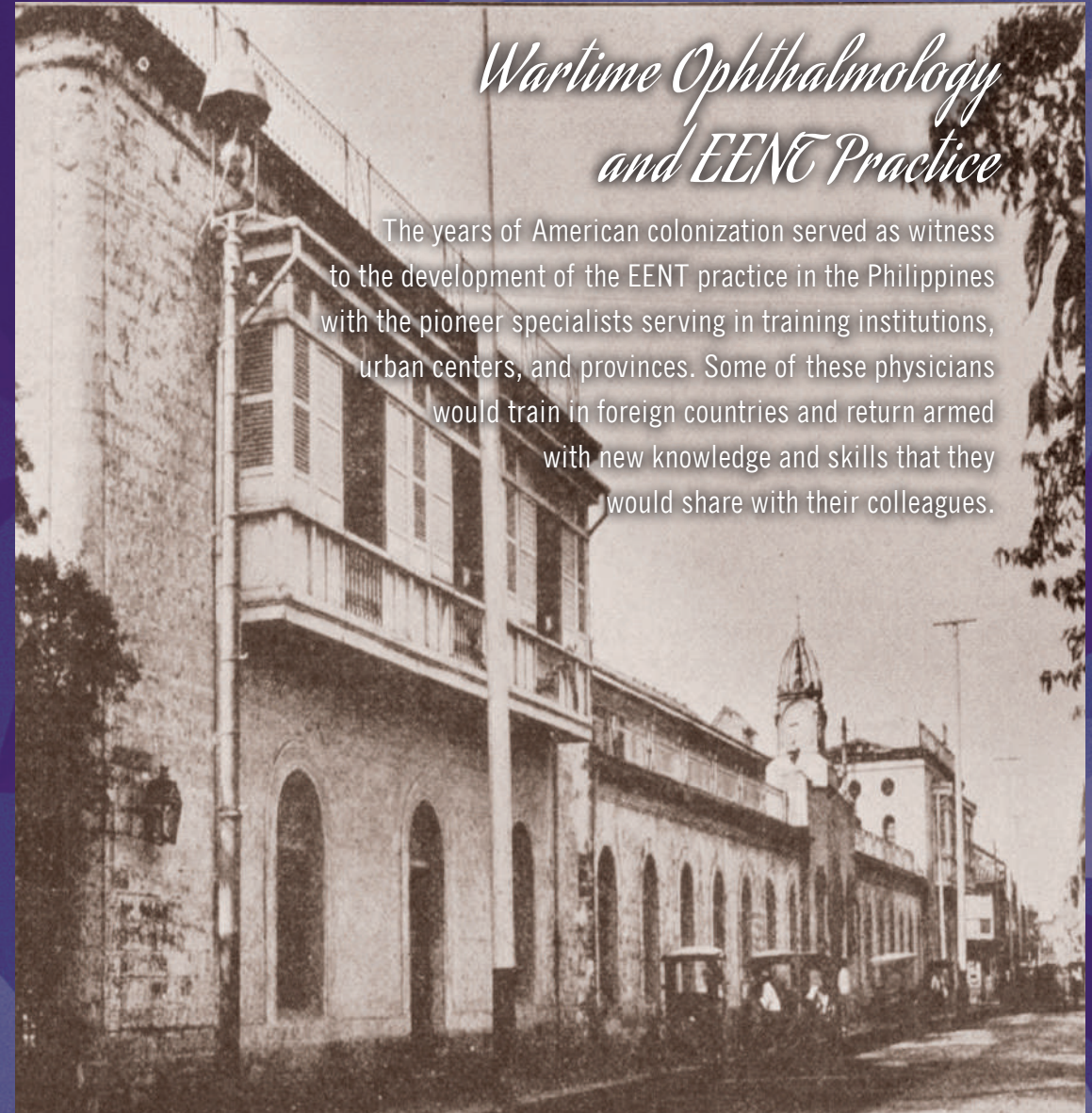


In May 1911, the Department of Eye, Ear, Nose, and Throat (EENT) of the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) was established with **Dr. Reinhart Remebe**, a German ophthalmologist and a naturalized American, as its first head and professor. As part of its commitment to pursue excellence and expedient service, the subject of ophthalmology and otolaryngology were included in the undergraduate curriculum of the Philippine Medical School (PMS) (now the University of the Philippines College of Medicine). Thereafter, a 5-year residency training program in EENT was established at the PGH - the teaching hospital of the PMS. In 1914, **Dr. Aristeo Rizal Ubaldo**, Dr. Jose Rizal's nephew, was appointed as the first Filipino chairperson of the department; he served for almost four decades. During his term, Dr. Ubaldo introduced the intracapsular method of lens extraction using the Ignacio Barraquer erysiphake, a milestone in Philippine ophthalmology.



Wartime Ophthalmology and EENT Practice

The years of American colonization served as witness to the development of the EENT practice in the Philippines with the pioneer specialists serving in training institutions, urban centers, and provinces. Some of these physicians would train in foreign countries and return armed with new knowledge and skills that they would share with their colleagues.



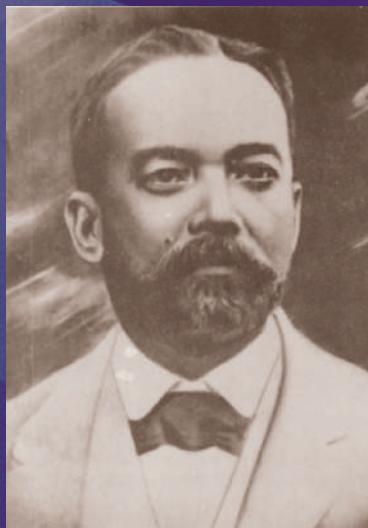
The growth of the subspecialty was hampered by the World War II years (1941-1945) when people moved from the urban centers to seek a safe haven in the mountains and provinces. The EENT practitioners, at this time, provided medical treatment wherever they found themselves in and with whatever materials were available. In the later years, knowledge and skills obtained by their interaction and training with Japanese military surgeons and physicians would also contribute to the improvement of EENT in the Philippines.

Post-War Experience

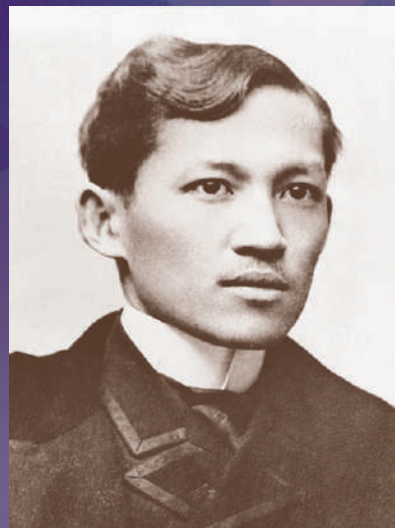
By 1946 after the liberation from the Japanese occupation, many Filipino physicians took advantage of the vast opportunity to train in ophthalmology in the USA and Europe – many of whom were under fellowship programs.

The re-development and recognition of ophthalmology as a separate specialty in the Philippines had been the ultimate dream of **Dr. Geminiano T. de Ocampo**, the Father of Modern Philippine Ophthalmology, since his return from the USA in 1947. Having been trained in EENT at PGH, where he would later join its roster of faculty, he further honed his mastery of ophthalmology at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland and at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York, under the Kellogg Fellowship Program. So impressed he must have been with his new learnings that it became his mission to overhaul a system noting that “...the eye alone is verily more than enough for a man’s whole life work if he should aspire for higher standards as that of American ophthalmology.”

Separating ophthalmology from otolaryngology would however prove to be challenging and difficult, and would take more than a decade to achieve. The EENT tradition had already been deeply ingrained in training hospitals during the American occupation that even the state university hospital, PGH, had subscribed to it since 1911. It also did not help that the joint EENT program and practice had already been recognized by a professional specialty society, the Philippine Ophthalmological and Otolaryngological Society (POOS) which was established on November 25, 1945 with **Dr. Antonio Fernando Sr.** as its founding president.



Dr. Joaquin Gonzalez-Lopez



Dr. Jose P. Rizal



Dr. Severino Alberto, Sr.



Dr. Geminiano T. de Ocampo

Notwithstanding these challenges and with his resoluteness, Dr. De Ocampo became the first among his contemporaries to limit professional work to ophthalmology in the post-war era. In 1952, he established the first eye hospital in war-ravaged Manila. Soon in 1961, the eye section of the EENT department of PGH was weaned off from the combined program by an act of the University of the Philippines Board of Regents with Dr. de Ocampo as becoming its first chairman.

As the world was reeling from the ruins of World War II, necessity became the mother of invention and new opportunities. Rapid growth in medical and health sciences in the western world became exuberantly felt in the early 1950s. America and Western Europe continued to progress as centers for learning of the deeper and finer appreciation of the sub-specialty disciplines in ophthalmology - ocular microbiology, ophthalmic pathology, corneal transplantation, glaucoma, retina and vitreous.



Dr. Gloria D. Lim receiving her certificate of training from AFIP

The expansion of health services became a major social concern of governments. There was a boom in the exodus of Filipino medical graduates as well as of those previously trained in EENT to re-train in ophthalmology. These enthusiastic learners were later joined by those who took up fellowship programs in selected disciplines in accordance with the staff and faculty development of the sponsoring eye departments in training institutions. While many stayed abroad, many likewise returned and helped in the capacity building of the country's ophthalmic practice and teaching of ophthalmology - up till the 1960s when local ophthalmic residency training was still marginal. One of them was **Dr. Edgardo T. Caparas** who had his internship and subsequent ophthalmology training in the USA from 1948 to 1952. He became a diplomate of the American Board of Ophthalmology in 1952 and was the first Filipino ophthalmologist to be conferred and recognized as a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in 1955. In 1954, the first eye department was established for the medical school and training hospital of Manila Central University, with Dr. Caparas as its founding chairman.

Prominent foreign-trained ophthalmologists during this period who subspecialized and later became pillars in Philippine Ophthalmology were the following:

- **Dr. Romeo B. Espiritu**, Retina and Cornea, New York Eye & Ear Infirmary, New York, USA
- **Dr. Gloria D. Lim**, Orbit, St. Mary's Hospital, New York, USA and Ophthalmic Pathology, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington DC, USA
- **Dr. Jose M. Marin**, Glaucoma, University of London, Institute of Ophthalmology, London, UK
- **Dr. Timoteo B. Jimenez**, Neuro-ophthalmology, Johns Hopkins University, Maryland, USA
- **Dr. Vicente T. de la Paz, Jr.**, Retina, Wills Eye Hospital, Pennsylvania, USA
- **Dr. Liborio L. Mangubat**, Orbit, New York Polyclinic Medical School and Hospital, New York, USA

Soon after the return of many more foreign-trained eye physicians, came the establishment of new eye departments in medical schools and their training hospitals.

While all of these returning sub-specialists were making their own independent strides in Philippine Ophthalmology (both in teaching and in the clinics) - there were external statutory legislative and executive acts that were further propelling the advances in the ophthalmic community. Notable among them were the following:

- RA 349 of 1949: Establishment of the Philippine Eye Bank for Sight Restoration
- Presidential Proclamation No. 40 of July 1954: Declaration of the first week of August of every year as National Sight Conservation Week by President Ramon Magsaysay
- RA 4593 of 1965: Establishment of the Philippine Eye Research Institute under the UP System

Beginnings of the Country's Center for Ophthalmic Research

The proposal for the creation of a national eye research institute began as a bill drafted by the University of the Philippines (UP) Counsel, Atty. Perfecto Fernandez, in February 1965. It was later signed into law by President Diosdado P. Macapagal on June 19, 1965 as Republic Act 4593, with the support of the UP President, Carlos P. Romulo and endorsement of House Speaker Cornelio Villareal and Senate President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Dr. Geminiano de Ocampo was appointed as the institute's first director in October of the same year.

The Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI) was established for the purpose of becoming the country's center for ophthalmic research activities and repository of recorded ophthalmic literature and information on eye research. As the premiere eye research institute of the country, it was mandated by law to:

- Undertake clinical, applied, and epidemiological research on eye diseases;
- Conduct basic studies on different eye diseases;
- Perform the research functions of the UP Department of Ophthalmology;
- Collaborate with scientific researchers in other fields of medicine;
- Provide stimulation and assistance to other ophthalmic researchers in the country;
- Cooperate with scientific research activities here and abroad; and
- Formulate plans, activities, or proposals and recommend policies, procedures, rules, and regulations for adoption by the Board of Regents consistent with its powers and effective operation.

In 1966, a 5-year development plan was formulated and implemented for the institute, prioritizing the expansion of its physical plant and extending laboratories, and facilitating its research programs. With its upgraded facilities and acquired equipment, including the first argon laser in the Philippines from the National Science and Development Board, the institute was able to conduct more researches that addressed its agenda. Likewise, both administrative and research personnel of the institute increased by the end of 1971.



Birth of the Subspecialty Disciplines in the Eye Departments

In the midst of the world's rebuilding efforts during the peace time, many local ophthalmologists availed of the rich opportunities occasioned by the growing interest and advancement in overseas eye research provided by many academic and training institutions in America and Europe.

The return of these foreign trained Filipino ophthalmologists paved the way for “the seminal beginnings of sub-specialization in ophthalmology. Special clinics had been established as vehicles for “problem solving” of particular eye diseases in the EENT department of the university hospital.”

Among the first sub-specialty clinics established in the country were those in UP-PGH:

- 1950 – Cornea Clinic, under Dr. Geminiano de Ocampo
- 1955 – Lacrimal System and Oculoplasty, under Dr. Liborio L. Mangubat
- 1955 – Orbit & Ophthalmic Pathology, under Dr. Gloria D. Lim
- 1958 – Retina, under **Dr. Ramon T. Batunghacal**
- 1958 – Glaucoma, under **Dr. Emmanuel M. Almeda**
- 1960 – Neuro-Ophthalmology, under Dr. Timoteo B. Jimenez
- 1961 – Uveitis, under **Dr. Romeo V. Fajardo**
- 1962 – Strabismus, under **Dr. Marcos R. Fojas**

The new learnings in these sub-specialty clinics became the harbinger of the teaching transformation from a “monolithic specialty” to a multi-specialty. This paradigm shift became a new standard in the expansion of the scientific and technological depths of the practice and teaching of ophthalmology in later years.



*Philippine General Hospital
German Digital Library @John Tewell*



Youngest resident in ophthalmology (standing at extreme left) in 1934. In the front row are the visiting staff members: Drs. Vivencio Alcantara, Aristeo Ubaldo, Chief of EENT, Herminio Velarde, Antonio Fernando. The Alcantara Memorial Lecture of the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology was named after Dr. Vivencio Alcantara upon my suggestion. At the back next to me are Drs. Conrado Ayuyao, senior resident: Trajano Bernardo, and Tomas Ilano. Only Dr. Tomas Ilano and I are still alive.

“The POOS was organized and established on November 25, 1945. This became the banner year of organized Philippine Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology from where our present organization is rooted.”



Staff of the Department of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology of P.G.H. in 1950. Drs. Carlos Yambao, Aristeo Ubaldo, Antonio Fernando, Herminio Velarde, Geminiano T. de Ocampo, Jose N. Cruz. Residents: Drs. Villadolid, Jose Valenzuela, Carmencita Valenzuela, Ariston Bautista, Estrella Horilleno and Ramon Batungbakal.



Founder and Director of the Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI). 1967 Dr. Geminiano T de Ocampo.



Left to right: Leopoldo Rivera, Jr. President Ramon Magsaysay, Dr. Geminiano de Ocampo and Dr. Jesus Tamezis at Malacañang Palace during the First Sight-Saving Week Celebration in August, 1954.



The PERI staff during the directorship of Dr. Geminiano de Ocampo

Beginnings of Organized Philippine Ophthalmology

Even prior to the arrival of the first batch of returning foreign-trained Filipino ophthalmologists, the EENT practitioners saw the need to organize themselves as a professional organization. Formed by twenty-four Filipino EENT physicians at the North General Hospital, now known as the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center (1965), the **Philippine Ophthalmological and Otolaryngological Society (POOS)** was organized and established on November 25, 1945. This became the banner year of organized Philippine Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology from where our present organization is rooted.



Philippine Ophthalmological and Otolaryngological Society: Drs. T. Ilano, G. de Ocampo, F. Reyes, A. Fernando, J. Eusebio, J.N. Cruz, and H. Velarde, Sr. in the first row; C. Maloles, V. Sevilla and A. Ubaldo in the second row. Taken at the Inaugural Meeting of the POOS in 1945.



Dr. Jesus Eusebio Sr. with foreign speakers during the 1st APAO Congress in Manila



First congress of A.P.A.O. Executive committee opens in Manila today



Dr. J. V. TAMESIS
Exec. Chairman



Dr. R. T. SAYOC
Exec. Vice-President



Dr. M. ALMEDA
Secretary General



Dr. F. GUTLALA



Dr. C. V. YAMBAO



Dr. J. DE LEON



Dr. V. L. JOCSON



Dr. L. MANGUBAY



Dr. N. G. LEGASTO



Dr. A. DE Ocampo



Dr. L. LUCSON

Bare APAO aims

The Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology was organized during the Eighteenth International Congress of Ophthalmology in Brussels on September 11, 1958 with the encouragement and blessings of the International Council of Ophthalmology. The principal objective is to bring about closer relations among ophthalmologists and ophthalmological societies in the Asia-Pacific Area after a geographical and regional pattern set by the International Council of Ophthalmology similar to that of the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology and the European Association of Ophthalmology. Other objectives are to encourage the free exchange of ophthalmological knowledge in these countries as well as other regions of the world, to improve the teaching and practice of ophthalmology and to fight the great scourge of blindness in the many underdeveloped countries in the Asia-Pacific Area.

Guest lecturers



GUEST LECTURERS at the first congress of the APAO, from left are: Dr. J. B. Higgins, Dr. D. S. McLaren, Dr. S. Sugar, Dr. J. Barraquer and Dr. A. Nakajima. Another guest lecturer is Dr. Geminiano de Ocampo, president of APAO and POS.

THE A.P.A.O. CONGRESS
was BORN in MANILA . . .

. . . be PROUD of it,
. . . be PART of it !!

Other APAO officers



Dr. V. K. GHYENIS
1st Vice-President



Dr. I. MANN
2nd Vice-President



Dr. W. J. HOLMES
Council



Dr. R. CHING
Council



SIR DUKE-ELDER
Adviser



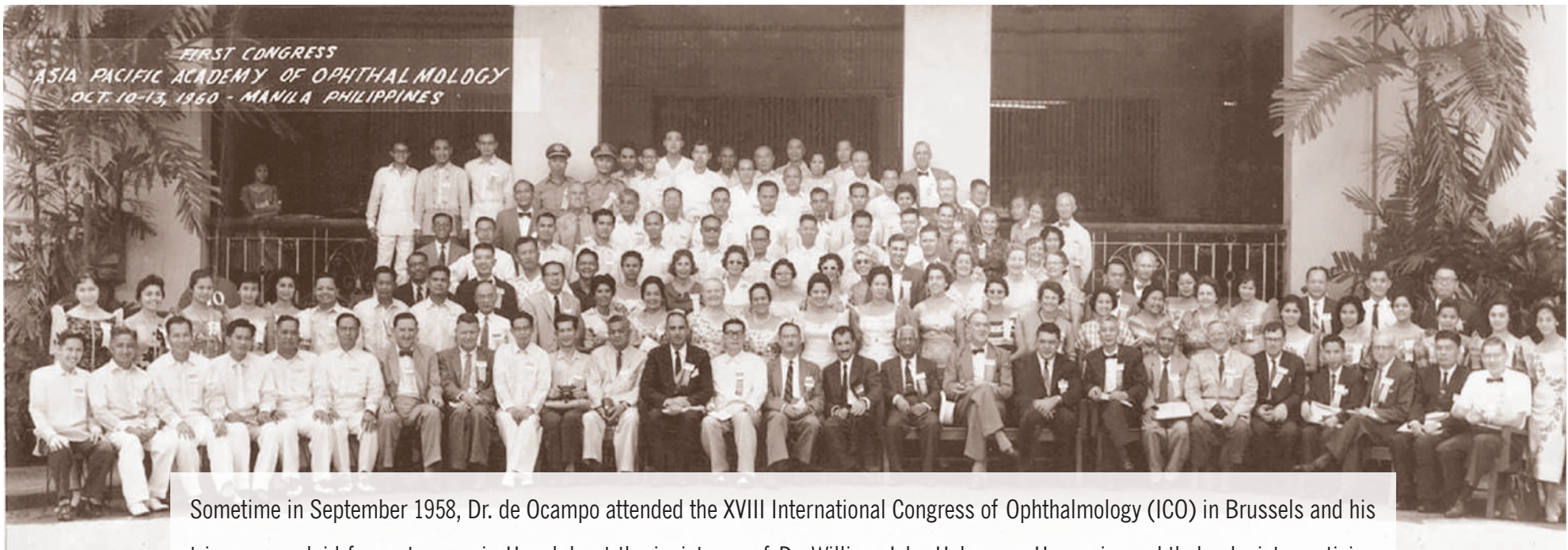
Prof. G. B. BETTI
Adviser

It is noteworthy to know that the POOS became one of the first specialty societies to be formed in the country, recognized officially by and affiliated with the Philippine Medical Association. It was likewise honored with a recognition by other international EENT societies and was listed in the 1946 issue of the AMA Archives of Ophthalmology. Its main function was to contribute to the growth & development of the specialty and among its initial activities were the following;

- Establishment of the EENT library
- Publication of the POOS Bulletin in 1946 (later becoming the Philippine Journal of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology or PJOO in 1955)
- Holding of regular scientific meetings with foreign faculty & guests
- Creation of a qualifying board in 1950 (later re-organized as the PBOO in 1954)
- Creation of the Dr. Jose Rizal Memorial Lectureship in Ophthalmology in 1955 - a biennial event that recognizes Filipino & foreign ophthalmologists who, through their life-long studies and endeavors, had contributed significantly to the growth & development of the specialty in the Philippines. The first honoree of this lectureship was Dr. Edmundo A. Reyes who talked on "Recent Ideas on Visual Perception".



From Left: Dr. Joaquin Barraquer, Dr. Geminiano de Ocampo, Dr. William Holmes, Dr. Jesus Tamesis, Dr. R. Ching, Dr. Akira Nakajima



Sometime in September 1958, Dr. de Ocampo attended the XVIII International Congress of Ophthalmology (ICO) in Brussels and his trip was waylaid for a stopover in Honolulu at the insistence of Dr. William John Holmes, a Hungarian ophthalmologist practicing in Hawaii, to discuss his desire to unify the eye specialty societies in the Asia-Pacific region. It thus came to be that the framework of the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO) was finalized in Brussels and Dr. De Ocampo was elected as its founding President, upon the encouragement of Dr. Holmes. The APAO constitution was subsequently drafted a month later in Manila with Dr. Holmes (USA), Dr. De Ocampo (Philippines), **Dr. Jesus V. Tamesis** (Philippines), and Dr. Robert F. Lowe (Australia) in attendance. The Philippines was designated to be the first host of the APAO's inaugural Congress in Manila on October 10-13, 1960.

By the end of 1950s, even prior to the APAO Congress, some forty-seven years after the Americans introduced the EENT model in Philippine medicine, the newly trained and re-loaded Filipino ophthalmologists considered the formation of a separate eye society as an essential step towards the further growth of the specialty. The hosting of the first APAO Congress in Manila became the kindling point of this restive desire and the catalyst for the premature birth of the Philippine Ophthalmological Society (POS), an exclusive organization of ophthalmologists, on October 24, 1958 with Dr. De Ocampo as its founding president as well.

“The exuberance to establish an eye society was so compelling with the prospect of hosting an international eye meeting in Manila within two years (from the Brussels Meeting)... that the Filipino ophthalmologists formed not one but two eye societies” – the other one being the reactionary **Ophthalmological Society of the Philippines (OSP)** established a month later, on November 25, 1958 with **Dr. Severino Lopez** as its founding president.

Because of human frailties and misunderstandings, each group firmly believed that its society was the true eye society in the country. Dr. Salceda amusingly noted that *“...And so for twelve years, the two (societies) co-existed looking at each other at the corner of their eyes.”*

After twelve long years of colorful though subtle “love-hate relationship” between the two societies, the hatchet was finally laid to rest with the resoluteness of **Dr. Conrado P. Banzon (POOS President)** and the selfless cooperation of the incumbent Presidents of OSP (**Dr. Manuel G. Hechanova**) and of POS (Dr. Liborio L. Mangubat). These two societies would merge into the unified **Philippine Society of Ophthalmology (PSO)** on November 25, 1970. After a careful re-drafting and subsequent ratification of the new by-laws and constitution by the members of both societies, an election of new set of officers followed where **Dr. Salvador R. Salceda** was elected as the founding president of PSO.