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Professor Philippe Rasoanaivo

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OBITUARY

Professor Philippe Rasoanaivo

Unveiling the ethnopharmacological potential of the flora of Madagascar: in memory of Philippe Rasoanaivo



Professor Philippe Rasoanaivo,¹ University of Antananarivo, Madagascar, died on Wednesday, 13 July 2016 from a heart attack, at the age of 70.

Professor Rasoanaivo was well known as one of the most distinguished African phytochemists, as also recognised by several international prizes. He won the 2015 Olusegun Obasanjo Prize for using traditional medicine to improve the efficacy of existing drugs for brain disorders and also treating sexual dysfunction among men. He had just been awarded the Prize at the last General Assembly meeting in Kasane, Botswana, in June 2016. Professor Rasoanaivo authored several books and more than 150 international research articles, including some recently published in *Natural Product Research*.

Professor Rasoanaivo developed a unique mixture of scientific knowledge dedicated to the utilisation of endemic plants for ethnobotanical, economic, medicinal and social uses. He wanted to learn everything that was necessary to understand and study the extraordinary flora of his country, obtaining this information to help its people.

Throughout his life, countless examples of his remarkableness can easily be found. He was an excellent botanist and, living in a country well known for an exceptional endemic flora, he was able to find and collect many species, and show the world their importance. He was a great ethnopharmacologist, learning the popular uses of plants from the people of his country, and using this information to start a scientific validation of their efficacy. He was a modern researcher: in times of fragmented research, he was able to perform the full range of research on natural products, from chemistry to applied pharmacology. He was a successful and organised director

of the *Institut Malgache de Recherches Appliquées*, promoting the cultivation of crops of economic importance.

In this obituary, we have provided a synthesis of his important scientific achievements and human qualities, since we had the privilege of working with him and he was able to teach us what modern ethnopharmacology is.

Note

1. The picture shows Professor Philippe Rasoanaivo at the time of receiving the sixth Sven Brohult Award for his research on endemic medicinal and aromatic plants used by traditional healers in Madagascar against a range of diseases (photo credit: IFS - International Foundation for Science, 2011).

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