



His roles in public health have been widely recognised, but as **Subhatra Bhumiprabhas** reports, a boy of humble origins grew up to be much more than just a doctor

Though a doctor of medicine by training, Professor Prawase Wasi has been given many other titles for his contributions to Thai society over several decades. To the medical fraternity, he is a great teacher and role model for medical students. Members of the public recognise him as a thinker, social critic, reform advocate and campaigner for change.

Prawase prefers to call himself “just a senior citizen”, with many suggestions for a better society.

“I can say anything. I have no interest in power or money. People know this,” he once said.

In the area of medical services, Prawase has been well recognised internationally for his role in community and public health. He won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service in 1981. The citation praised him as one of the world’s leading hematologists. It also commended him for his inspired teaching.

“To his medical students he

advocates: ‘Go where the problems of health are most urgent, among the poor, mostly in rural villages.’ His focus upon community health, along with heightened social awareness among students and concern with rural problems gradually being shown by other teachers, has resulted in an increasing number of medical graduates making careers in rural areas,” the citation read.

Murdoch University in Australia also presented him with an honorary degree in recognition of his contribution to medical research for the university.

Born in a farming family near the Thai-Burma border in Kanchanaburi province, the young Prawase silently observed the way of life of people from different social classes. The youngster saw that the rich could do something about their lives – the poor were helpless.

Thinking about helping the poor in some way, in 1955 Prawase

A highly versatile healer

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