

Obituary for Professor Akira Okada (1938-2007), Co-founding Editor of APJCN



Akira Okada was a founding Editor with Vichai Tanpaichitr and Mark Wahlqvist of the APJCN (Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition) in 1992. He was also the first President of the Asia Pacific Clinical Nutrition Society. He played a vital role in various nutrition societies, including the Japanese and Chinese Societies for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition and on several editorial boards other than APJCN. He was a key figure in the development of Clinical Nutrition in the Asia Pacific Region, especially North-East Asia. In due course, he was bestowed the Society's Annual Award for contributions to human health in the Asia Pacific region through the application of nutrition science.¹

Dr. Okada was born in Hyogo, Japan on 29 November 1938 and took his medical doctor's degree at Osaka University Medical School. In 1968, He obtained his PhD with work on Hirschsprung's Disease. Following this, he went to the University of Minnesota and spent 2 years as a surgical research fellow from 1969 to 1971, with opportunities to learn from the pioneering work of Dudrick and Wilmore on central venous nutrition. He then returned to the Surgical Department of Osaka University where he became Professor and Chair of Paediatric Surgery.

He made great contributions to the science of nutrition support and nutrient requirements. Although Ananda Prasad was the first to describe zinc deficiency in humans in 1961, Akira Okada was the first to report it in the course of clinical nutrition support, in 1975, at the International Nutrition Congress in Kyoto and with a Japanese publication,² followed by a report in English in 1976.³

Sadly, he died, aged 68 years of metastatic thyroid cancer on August 19th 2007 following several months of illness. After he retired from the Medical Directorship of Osaka University Hospital and the Chair of Paediatric Surgery in 2002, he became Director of Maternal and Child Welfare for Osaka. About 18 months before his death, he returned to work at the Okada Hospital, founded by his medical father, and it was where he died.

He loved music, especially Mozart, and was a good pianist. He was a gracious chaperone for many of his colleagues, their families and his friends into Japanese culture.

He is survived by his wife Utako, his son, Minoru (in Japan), his daughter, Yumiko, his grandson, Sohichiro, and grand daughter, Haruka. (in the USA).

References:

1. Akira Okada: APCNS Award for 2002 APJCN 2000;9(2):61.
2. Okada A, Takagi Y, Itakura T et al. Zinc deficiency during intravenous hyperalimentation. *Igakunoayumi (Medical Progress)* 1975;92:436-42. (in Japanese)
3. Okada A, Takagi Y, Itakura T et al. Skin lesions during intravenous hyperalimentation - zinc deficiency. *Surgery* 1976;80:629.

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