

Tomio Tada

Established the concept of immune suppression

If you want to study immunology in Japan then you should join the team of Tomio Tada at the University of Tokyo. That was the advice given in the early 1980s to Moriya Tsuji by his father, a medical school professor, who described Dr Tada as “a genius living above the clouds.”

So Dr Tsuji, after completing medical school, pursued his doctorate under Tada and soon learnt that his father’s advice was correct. “His lectures were always outstanding,” said Dr Tsuji, now at Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center, Rockefeller University, New York City. “Most Japanese scientists are not good speakers, often terrible at giving lectures. Not Dr Tada. I loved his lectures. His brain was about four or five steps ahead of everybody else.”

Indeed so far ahead that in 1971 Tada startled the world of immunology by establishing the concept of immune suppression. The generally held view at the time was that T cells only help antibody responses. But Tada held a different view, leading a team that for the first time showed the existence of suppressor T cells.

“He was definitely the brains of the team,” Dr Tsuji said, adding that Dr Tada’s strength was in formulating concepts. “He was very logical in creating hypotheses, but at the same time very creative.”

Immunological homeostasis

Also in the early 1970s Richard Gershon of Yale University suggested that T cell mediated suppression is involved in immunological tolerance. Tada and Gershon continued to analyse the properties of suppressor T cells, establishing the concept that immunological homeostasis is regulated by suppressor T cells through interaction with other T cells.

Masato Kubo, a protege of Dr Tsuji and now team leader of the Laboratory for Signal Network at RIKEN Yokohama Institute, said, “Tomio’s suppressor T cell idea predated the concept of regulatory T cells, which have recently become a topic of great interest among immunologists.”

Tomio Tada was born on 31 March 1934 in Yuki, Japan. In high school he exhibited a love for literature, but, encouraged by an uncle who was a doctor, young Tomio opted for medical school, giving up his dream of being a writer.

Tada earned his medical degree from Chiba University in 1959 and a doctorate in 1964 from

Chiba’s department of pathology. He took a fellowship in 1964-66 and 1968 at Children’s Asthma Research Institute in Denver, now the National Asthma Center and part of National Jewish Health, studying the basic mechanisms of the allergic response in the laboratory of Teruko and Kimishige Ishizaka, discoverers of immunoglobulin E.

In 1977 Tada moved from the department of immunology at Chiba University to Tokyo University. He continued his exploration of T cells, said Dr Kubo, including the physicochemical analysis of suppressor molecules and his studies on the role of suppressor cells in immune networks, T cell signalling, and T cell development. Tada “devoted an enormous effort” in nurturing students and researchers, said Dr Kubo, adding, “His academic progeny now play important roles in many different fields of immunology.”

By the 1980s Tada had become a global giant in immunology, often travelling abroad for conferences and to collect awards and honorary degrees. “He loved New York City,” said Dr Tsuji, who moved there at the urging of his mentor. “He had a lot of friends in New York, especially at New York University.”

He served as president of the Japanese Society for Immunology (1985-1988) and for the International Union of Immunological Societies as executive board member (1991-1994) and president (1994-1997). In 1989 he founded *International Immunology* and was editor of other journals.

In 1995, a year after retirement into emeritus status at Tokyo University, Tada was named director of the research institute for biological science at the Tokyo University of Science in Chiba, the first immunology focused research institute in Japan, serving until 2000.

During his decades as scientist and mentor, his dream of being a writer continued to flicker, and

later in life he spent more time on non-scientific writing. “His scientific writing was not like that of a scientist,” Dr Tsuji said. “He wrote in a different way, even in English.”

Classical Japanese drama

Tada received the Osaragi Jiro award in 1993 for his book *Men-eki no Imiron (Theory of the Meaning of Immunology)*, the Japan Essayist Club award in 2000 for *Dokushaku-yoteki (Sake for One)*, the Hideo Kobayashi award in 2008 for *Kamoku naru Kyojin (A Reticent Giant)*. He wrote

Noh plays, a form of classical Japanese drama performed since the 14th century, addressing controversial topics, such as brain death and heart transplantation, Koreans forced to labour in Japan during the second world war, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Einstein’s theory of relativity.

Dr Tsuji believes that had Tada focused on writing from the beginning, instead of science, “he could have been a great, great writer in Japan.”



HITOSHI MIYATA (JAPAN PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY)

Tada held a different view, leading a team that for the first time showed the existence of suppressor T cells

In 2001 Tada had a massive stroke, leaving him partially paralysed. Unable to speak and to use his dominant hand to type, he continued to write. In 2006 he sharply criticised a new law restricting rehabilitation benefits in a book titled *My War For Rehabilitation: Is The Right To Live Protected For The Weakest People?* In 2009 he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun (gold and silver star) from the emperor and empress of Japan who personally encouraged him to “please take care of your health.”

Tada leaves behind his wife, Norie Tada, a son and two daughters.

Ned Stafford

Tomio Tada, immunologist (b 1934; q Chiba University, 1959), died on 21 April 2010 from prostate cancer.

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Hazel Mary Egan
(née Phillips)



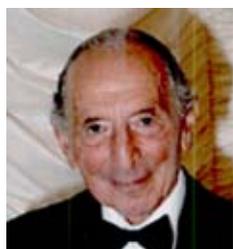
Former community paediatrician Deptford and medical officer Charlton Park School for the Physically Disabled (b 1932; q Guy's Hospital, London, 1956; DRCOG, DCH, DA), died from subarachnoid haemorrhage on 4 March 2010.

As a young senior house officer, Hazel Mary Egan (née Phillips) became the first doctor at the 100-bed Mbase Hospital in Eastern Region, Nigeria. In 1961 she was civilian medical officer in anaesthetics with the Royal Canadian Air Force in Germany. Returning to south east London, she worked in general practice, anaesthetics, and as a community and school medical officer, also chairing the BMA's Greenwich and Bexley division. In retirement she established the Greenwich-Lewisham branch of the New Parent-Infant Network (NEWPIN) to help disadvantaged parents in the inner city. She leaves a husband, Michael; two sons; and five grandchildren.

Ed Egan

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c3739

Basil Robinson



Former general practitioner Huddersfield (b 1916; q Cardiff 1938; MRCP), d 20 April 2010.

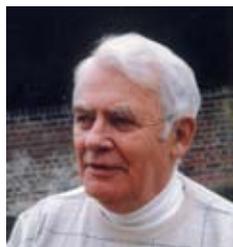
Basil Robinson enlisted in the Royal Navy shortly after qualifying, serving as a medical officer in HMS *Hesperus* and HMS *Prince Albert*. Despite having had rheumatic fever

in childhood, he represented his university at water polo and played rugby for the Royal Marine Services Team. After the second world war he worked as a locum throughout the United Kingdom, finally purchasing a practice in Huddersfield before the NHS. He assisted in various hospital clinics, including the long stay geriatric wards of Mill Hill Hospital, and instigated the Occupational Health Department at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, where he worked for many years. He retired from his practice at the age of 80. He leaves a daughter and two grandsons.

Maria Elizabeth Wybrew

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Gwyn Rowlands



Former medical adviser Wellcome Foundation (b 1928; q The London 1951; FFPM, DObstRCOG), died from a brain haemorrhage after prolonged failing health on 30 April 2010.

After house appointments at the London Hospital and in Newport, Gwent, Gwyn Rowlands did national service in the Royal Air Force. After a short period at sea with P&O, he joined his father in general practice in Berkhamsted, leaving in the early 1970s to become medical adviser with the Wellcome Foundation until he retired in 1990. An all round athlete, Gwyn captained the United Hospitals XV for rugby and played on the wing for the Cardiff and Welsh sides that beat the All Blacks in 1953—victories that have yet to be repeated. He leaves a wife, Sheila; three daughters; and three grandchildren.

John Evans

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c3735

Stewart Anderson Stephen

Former consultant in geriatric medicine Scottish Borders (b 1923; q St Andrews 1950; FRCP), d 16 May 2010.



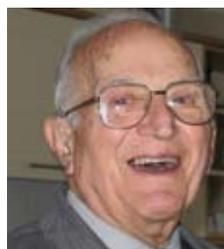
A promising sportsman at school, Stewart Anderson Stephen had a flying accident in the Royal Air Force in 1944, sustaining serious injuries to both ankles and losing his four right fingers. Discharged from the RAF on medical grounds, he then studied medicine. After qualification he developed an interest in cardiology, soon joining ICI to work with Sir James Black on propranolol. Stewart returned to clinical practice in 1969 as the first consultant geriatrician in the Scottish Borders. He established the best care for elderly people by involving colleagues in social services and general practice in planning the service—a new approach at that time. He leaves a wife, Catherine, and three children.

C M Stephen

R D D Duncan

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c3738

Victor Henry Wheble



Former consultant traumatic and orthopaedic surgeon Tameside General Hospital, Ashton under Lyne (b 1919; q Oxford/King's College Hospital, London, 1944; MA (Oxon), FRCSed, Dip Med Col), d 10 January 2010.

An Oxford exhibitioner graduating first class, Victor Wheble was also best student at King's. A doctor during the Blitz, he then specialised in surgery and tropical medicine to serve in the Belgian Congo as a missionary. On returning to England after a few years, he eventually became senior registrar in traumatic and orthopaedic

surgery in Northampton, writing a textbook for nurses and joining St John Ambulance Brigade. He was consultant at Tameside, 1959-84. His many contributions included pioneering implant surgery and developing the Wheble Künschner nail driver. Predeceased by his first wife, Margaret, in 1990, he leaves his second wife, Vi; four children and four stepchildren; and 17 grandchildren.

Andrew Wheble

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c3736

Frank Wright



Former general practitioner Norfolk Park, Sheffield (b 1936; q Sheffield 1960; MBE), died on 6 May from severe head injuries sustained in an attack. Until his retirement in 1997 Frank Wright had worked for more than 30 years in an inner city practice in predominantly high rise flats. He developed a programme for addicts, mainly heroin, and supported other doctors with professional or personal problems, many referred to him by the local medical committee. He was interested in research, performed and taught surgery to general practitioners, and held clinical assistantships in dermatology and renal medicine. He was also a loyal member and president of the Sheffield Medico-Chirurgical Society, documenting its history. He leaves a wife, Barbara, and two sons.

Ian Cooke

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c3602

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