

Announcement

In memoriam: Huan-Yao Lei: a great Leader, Educator and Immunologist

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Dr Huan-Yao Lei (1955–2012), National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) Chair Professor and *Experimental Biology & Medicine (EBM)* Asian editor, passed away on 26 March 2012. He was 57 and is survived by his wife, a daughter and a son.

Professor Lei, a world-famous virologist and immunologist, was born in Kaohsiung county, Taiwan, in 1955. He graduated from National Taiwan University in 1977 and joined NCKU in 1983 as an instructor after receiving his PhD degree from the Department of Microbiology & Immunology at the Northwestern University, Chicago, IL, USA. He was promoted to Associate Professor, Professor, Distinguished Professor and NCKU Chair Professor during his 29 years of service. He served as Chairperson of the Department of Microbiology & Immunology and the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences for a total of 12 years.

Professor Lei's research interests primarily focused on virus-induced infectious diseases and liver cancer. He was the leading scientist in the dengue virus research field and was also famous for his excellent research work on enterovirus 71, hepatitis B and C, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) coronavirus. Collectively, Professor Lei and his research team published more than 250 scientific papers and a book entitled 'Dengue Disease'. He received the distinguished research award from the National Science Council three times, which is the highest honor, as the maximum number of times this award can be won is three. He was the recipient of the 14th Wang-Min-Ning foundation award for 'Research outcomes that have tremendous beneficial impact on human health'.

Professor Lei was not only a great scientist but also a humanitarian. He was concerned about all issues related to human health, and employed his scientific knowledge to help society resolve several important infectious disease outbreaks. For example, his team was the pioneering group to identify enterovirus 71 as the responsible pathogen for the outbreak of hand, foot and mouth disease in 1998, which helped the government to develop an efficacious treatment regimen to stop this epidemic outbreak. In 2003, 2004 and 2009 when the pandemic outbreaks of SARS, avian

influenza and A/H1N1 influenza occurred, respectively, Professor Lei and his team were immediately and actively involved in studying the viruses and underlying mechanisms that caused these diseases. In 2009, Professor Lei and his research team helped the first Children's Hospital of Ho-Chi-Ming City, Vietnam, to launch a clinical trial on enterovirus 71 and other viral infectious diseases, a program that aimed to resolve the epidemic outbreaks of these viral diseases. In addition, he also intended to help several countries in South Asia, including Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia, to develop research programs aimed at tackling severe virus-induced diseases.

In 2008, Professor Lei was appointed by *EBM*'s Editor-in-Chief, Dr Steven Goodman, to establish the first overseas editorial office of *EBM*, the Asian Office of *EBM*, at NCKU. This was the first step of *EBM*'s globalization plan. Under his great leadership, the *EBM* Asian office was set up and fully functional within a very short period of time. A manuscript processing pipeline was established that started with an English language precheck, before proceeding to a scientific review, to help improve the quality of manuscripts submitted from Asian countries, where English is not the native language. With this hearty service and other efforts in promoting the globalization of *EBM*, the manuscripts submitted from Asian countries dramatically increased and the overall quality of submitted manuscripts was improved. Professor Lei also served as an Associate Editor of *EBM* in the areas of Immunology/Microbiology/Virology.

Professor Lei will be remembered as a kind but highly disciplined mentor. A great half of his life was devoted to research and education at NCKU. He was a decent person who cared about his students but always kept a high standard for himself and his students. He educated students that research was an attitude, not a job. Graduate students need to be enthusiastic and disciplined in pursuing their professional career. The Confucius proverb 'Learning without thought is labor lost, thought without learning is perilous' was Professor Lei's motto. As an educator, Professor Lei encouraged students to think deeply and learn actively. He challenged students to dare to question authority. 'Nothing can be achieved if you blindly believe

in authority' he said. 'Opportunity is created by yourself but not a free gift from God' was his advice to young students and junior faculties. During his term as the Chairperson of the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, the average length of getting a PhD degree was reduced from 7 to 5.5 years, while the number of research papers published by PhD students almost doubled and the impact factor of papers was significantly increased.

Professor Lei was a great colleague and a wonderful friend to all the faculty at NCKU Medical Center. He was fair and unselfish in handling administrative work and always tried his best to support junior faculties. He set up several core facilities within the Medical Center to provide a better supporting system for faculty and graduate students to conduct their experiments. He established many important guidelines and protocols to safeguard the smooth running of the medical educational machinery. Even after he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last April, he still restlessly promoted the first national 'Infectious Disease and Signaling Research Center'. On 26 December 2011, the Infectious Disease and Signaling Research Center was finally inaugurated and Professor Lei was named the Center Director. During the opening ceremony, he said: '... and I will try my best to fight against my cancer so

we can work together sometime soon'. Unfortunately, after nearly a year's combat, Professor Lei lost the battle.

'Professor Lei was an invaluable treasure of NCKU and the scientific society. His death is a tremendous loss for our university, the entire nation and the international virology/immunology society' said the president of NCKU, Dr Hwung-Hweng Hwung. Yes, everyone who knows Professor Lei would agree with President Hwung's comment. Now, after finishing a long and splendid journey, Professor Lei rests in the Lord's garden. Looking down at us with the smile that we all are familiar with, I know he is going to say 'Opportunity is created by yourself but not a free gift from God'.

Farewell, my colleague, friend and mentor. Your spirit will be passed on indefinitely here at NCKU Medical Center and every corner all over the world where the sun shines, the wind blows and the star sparkles. We will always miss you!

In honor of Professor Lei, a foundation that aims to promote the education and research of microbiology/immunology will be set up by the Department of Microbiology & Immunology at NCKU. For further information, please contact Dr Bei-Chang Yang, Chairperson of the Department of Microbiology & Immunology (y1357@mail.ncku.edu.tw).