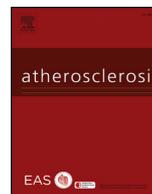




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## In memoriam: Dr. Akira Yamamoto 1932–2019

Dr. Akira Yamamoto suddenly passed away after a short illness on January 7, 2019. A notice of his untimely death reached us and came as a great shock to all of us. We would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.



Dr. Yamamoto was born in Osaka, Japan in 1932. He graduated from Osaka University Medical School in 1955 and he obtained the medical degree in 1956. He graduated from Osaka University Graduate School of Medicine and received a PhD for his research on lipid metabolism of fatty liver. As a postdoctoral fellow, he studied abroad at the City of Hope National Medical Center, CA, USA and worked on phospholipid metabolism with Prof. George Rouser from 1964 to 1967. After returning to Japan, he became the Director of the Lipid Research Laboratory at the Second Department of Internal Medicine of Osaka University and opened a specific outpatient clinic for patients with hyperlipidemia, especially familial hypercholesterolemia (FH).

While he was groping the way of effective treatment of severe FH patients, including FH homozygotes often suffering from heart attack, he came across the report of the discovery of an HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor (statin) from fungi by Prof. Akira Endo. Dr. Yamamoto met Prof. Endo and asked him to provide the statin for his patients. At that time, the pharmaceutical company Sankyo had not decided to develop the derivative to therapeutic drug because there was a marked species difference in the cholesterol lowering effects and side effects. However, because one patient was very sick due to the progression of coronary

artery disease, Dr. Yamamoto decided to apply this new cholesterol lowering agent to both FH homozygotes and heterozygotes. For the first time in the world, Dr. Yamamoto treated a case of severe homozygous FH with Compactin (a prototype of statins) donated by Prof. Endo in 1978 at the Osaka University Hospital. He demonstrated that ~900 mg/dl of serum total cholesterol in the first homozygous FH case was reduced to ~720 mg/dl after 10 days of treatment with Compactin. Subsequently, he treated a severe case of FH heterozygote with Compactin for life-saving and obtained the reduction of total cholesterol from ~400 mg/dl to ~250 mg/dl and observed the disappearance of a bruit in carotid arteries (Atherosclerosis 35: 259–266, 1980). Dr. Yamamoto was actually the first investigator to use a statin in “humans” and without his courageous decision, clinical application of statins would have been delayed.

From 1979 to 1996, he worked at the National Cardiovascular Center Research Institute (Suita, Osaka) as a Vice-Director. He also made a great contribution to the treatment of severe hyperlipidemia by the development of an LDL apheresis system in collaboration with Kaneka Co.

Since 1996, he has served as a clinician for aged patients at Mino City Health Center for the Elderly and, at the same time, he was working on the research of lipid metabolism and atherosclerosis as an Honorable Investigator of the National Cardiovascular Center.

He acted as a Board Member (Member-at-Large) of the International Atherosclerosis Society (IAS). He was also one of the founding members of the Asian-Pacific Society of Atherosclerosis and Vascular Disease (APSAVD) and former President of the International Society for Apheresis.

The vivid impression he made on all of us will always live in our memory.

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