



Obituary: Stephen I. Katz, MD, PhD (1941–2018)



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When I received a phone call from John Stanley late at night in Japan on December 20, 2018, with the sad news of the sudden loss of Steve Katz, I felt a previously unknown shock and grief. The sad news spread quickly around the world, and countless numbers of people expressed their profound grief through e-mails or text messages throughout the night. Stephen I. Katz, MD, PhD, was Director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases at NIH, USA from August 1995 until his death on December 20, 2018. Steve was a giant in dermatology and skin immunology, and trained a large number of outstanding immunodermatologists in many countries around the world, including USA, Japan, Korea, and Europe. Steve was a very special person who had myriad accomplishments, humanity, loyalty, love for family and friends, and civility and global inclusiveness. Steve was also a great mentor and an egoless and humble leader who taught us how to enjoy life through the world of science.

Steve Katz was born in New York in 1941, and spent his early years in the Washington, DC, and Bethesda, Maryland areas. After attending the University of Maryland, he graduated from Tulane University Medical School with honors in 1966. He completed a medical internship at Los Angeles County Hospital and did his dermatology residency at the University of Miami Medical Center from 1967 to 1970. He served in the US Army at Walter Reed Army Medical Center from 1970 to 1972. From 1972 to 1974, Dr. Katz completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Royal College of Surgeons of England and obtained a PhD in immunology from the University of London in 1974. He then became a Senior Investigator in the Dermatology Branch of the National Cancer Institute from 1974 to 2014, and assumed the position of Acting Chief in 1977. In 1980, he became Chief of the Branch, a position he held until 2002. In 1989, Dr. Katz also served as the Marion B. Sulzberger Professor

of Dermatology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, a position that he held until 1995.

Dr. Steve Katz served many professional societies in leadership positions. He was President of the Society for Investigative Dermatology and on the Board of the Association of Professors of Dermatology. He also led as Secretary-General of the 18th World Congress of Dermatology in New York in 1992, as Secretary-Treasurer of the Clinical Immunology Society, and as President of both the International League of Dermatological Societies and the International Committee of Dermatology. Steve received numerous honors and awards, including the Master Dermatologist Award and the Sulzberger Lecture Award of the American Academy of Dermatology, the Alfred Marchionini Gold Medal, the Rothman Award for distinguished service to investigative cutaneous medicine, the Kligman/Frost Award from the Society for Investigative Dermatology, and the National Cancer Institute's Outstanding Mentor Award. He was the recipient of the 7th Alan Rabson Award for NCI Intramural Cancer Research, twice received the Meritorious Rank Award, and also received the Distinguished Executive Presidential Rank Award, the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a civil servant. Moreover, he was elected as a member of the National Academy of Medicine (USA) in 1992. In 2012, he received the award, the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon from the Emperor of Japan.

Dr. Katz trained a large number of outstanding immunodermatologists in the US, Japan, Korea, Europe, and other countries. The first Japanese fellow at Steve's laboratory was Hideo Yaoita (Former Professor at Jichi Medical University), who contributed to the immuno-electro-microscopic localization of autoantigens in dermatitis herpetiformis and herpes gestationis in late 1970s. His second Japanese fellow was Kunihiko Tamaki (former Professor at University of Tokyo), who contributed to showing the derivation of epidermal Langerhans cells from bone marrow in 1979. The strong bond with Japanese fellows in Steve's lab was strengthened by the subsequent arrivals of Masafumi Iijima (former Professor at Showa University), Shinji Shimada (President and Professor at Yamanashi University), Masutaka Furue (Professor at Kyushu University), Setsuya Aiba (Professor at Tohoku University), and Hideo Asada (Professor at Nara Medical University). Former fellows of Dermatology Branch when Steve was the branch chief include Fujio Otsuka (former Professor at Tsukuba University), Yasushi Tomita (former Professor at Nagoya University), Yasuo Kubota (Professor at Kagawa University), Toshihiro Tanaka (Professor at Shiga University of Medical Science), Masayuki Amagai (Dean and Professor at Keio University), Tatsuyoshi Kawamura (Professor at Yamanashi University), Hidehisa Saeki (Professor at Nippon Medical School), Makoto Sugaya (Professor at the International



Figure 1. Steve's former fellows and friends celebrated his honor receiving the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon from the Emperor of Japan in Tokyo, December 2012.

University of Health and Welfare), Manabu Ohyama (Professor at Kyorin University), Keisuke Nagao (Earl Stadtman Investigator, Dermatology Branch, NIAMS), and Yayoi Tada (Professor at Teikyo University). As of 2019, 18 fellows from the Dermatology Branch, NIH, are or were in leading positions as professors or principal investigators in Japan. Among them, Shinji Shimada has been leading not only Dermatology and Medicine, but also General Science and Education in Japan as President of Yamanashi University.

The number of the distinguished leaders in Japan trained by Steve may indicate how much Steve has positively impacted the international Dermatology Community. What is even more

amazing than the number of his successful fellows is the fact that all of them loved and admired Steve Katz. When Steve received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon from the Emperor of Japan, more than 40 of his former fellows and friends from all over Japan visited Tokyo to celebrate in his honor (Figure 1) in December, 2012. Steve gave a memorable lecture on “Advances in Skin Biology and Skin Diseases with an Emphasis on Treatment”.

When Setsuya Aiba served as President of the annual meeting of the Japanese Dermatological Association in June 2017 in Sendai, Steve was invited as a special guest lecturer. Setsuya organized a party in honor of Steve, and the former fellows and friends shared a



Figure 2. Party in honor of Steve with his former Japanese fellows and friends in Sendai, June 2017.

very intimate and special time filled with lots of laughter and heart-warming moments with Steve (Figure 2).

Steve was always there for us at the critical turning points of our lives. He cared about people. He loved science, but he loved people even more. Steve was excited by great scientific achievements, but he was even more thrilled to see his people succeed and share happy moments with them. At the commencement speech at Tulane Medical School on May 19, 2018, Steve said “They don’t care what you know until they know that you care”, and “Sit down to

listen to patients’ stories and listen to people.” Steve will be greatly missed by his fellows, trainees, students, and their descendents in medical science communities around the world. Steve’s legacy and spirit will be passed on for many generations to come.

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