

HERPES VIRUSES AND VIRUS CHEMOTHERAPY

Pharmacological & Clinical Approaches

Editors:

R. Kono

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Pharmacological and Clinical Approaches

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Reisaku Kono †
1915-1985

Obituary

Reisaku Kono, M.D., the president of the Symposium on Pharmacological and Clinical Approaches to Herpes Viruses and Virus Chemotherapy, held on 10-13, September, 1984 at Oiso Prince Hotel, passed away on 23rd January, 1985. We express our deepest sorrow and grievance at his sudden demise, and express our deep sympathy for the bereaved family.

He was born on 4th October, 1915, the eldest son of an ophthalmologist who was the founding president of the Tokyo Ophthalmologists Association. He belonged to the biggest family of scholars in Japan, originating from Gensaku Mitsukuri. He graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1940, and became a virologist. He served as professor at the Virus Institute of Kyoto University, and Chief of Virus Department, National Institute of Health, Japanese Government. He discovered EV70, the causative agent for acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis. He was the chairman of the committee on SMON (subacute myelo-optico-neuritis) and led the research which established the etiology of the condition to be chionoform and not a virus. He contributed much to the success of the symposium on Herpes Chemotherapy held in September 1984, in Oiso. He raised funds, visited the USA several times to discuss the programme, set the programme and speakers, and edited various printed matter related to the meeting. He was very good in painting, and the Japanese paintings in the prelims of the programme or the book of abstracts were selected by him. Just before the meeting, his illness was discovered by chance. He underwent surgery a week after the meeting. We were fortunate that he could join us at the meeting. The course of surgery was uneventful, and he was planning to edit a book on acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis. Malignant cancer cells hidden in his brain killed him suddenly. We sincerely hope that his work will be continued by us and our colleagues for the benefit of mankind.

Akira Nakajima, M.D.

Professor of the Department of Ophthalmology
Juntendo University School of Medicine
Tokyo, Japan

Obituary

We are deeply saddened by the passing of one of the great leaders and teachers-Reisaku Kono. Dr. Kono was honored with the Hideyo Noguchi Memorial Award for Medicine in 1978 for his contribution to the establishment of the causative agent of acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis. The project of investigating this ocular disease gave me the lucky chance to join his research group. Those who knew Dr. Kono will vividly remember him as a distinguished leader with inspiring ability, sense of organization, and natural kindness to young physicians and investigators. I was able to spend much time with him during our expeditions in West Africa for seroepidemiological study of acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis, and I can say that he had a profound influence on me because of his outstanding intellect and personal charm. He will be greatly missed not only by his colleagues but also by ophthalmic microbiologists, because he was a virologist who had much interest in ocular infection.

Yukio Uchida, M.D.

Professor of the Department of Ophthalmology
Tokyo Women's Medical College
Tokyo, Japan

Obituary

It was a hot summer afternoon, about a month before this symposium on virus chemotherapy was to be held. Dr. Kono, professor at Saitama Medical College arrived unexpectedly at my office. He looked pale, somewhat uneasy . . . even irritated. It was unusual because he had always been gentle and calm. 'I'm in trouble,' he said quietly, after sitting for a moment's rest on the sofa. 'It seems that I have lung cancer. My luck may finally be running out.' It was so sudden. I was shocked. I could not believe what I had heard, and I could not find anything to say. He briefly explained the results of a physical check-up he had had at the National Cancer Center and told me he would probably have to undergo surgery before or during the symposium to be held in Oiso. 'I think you are rather lucky. From what you say, the lesion must still be fairly small and in the early stage.' These were my words of consolation . . . all I could manage at the moment. 'You know you've always enjoyed good fortune. Didn't you tell me that during World War II, you were luckily saved from a sinking warship when it was bombed?' 'Certainly I have been very lucky, but no more.' He smiled weakly.

In fact, he was not able to have the surgery before the symposium. So, he did his best to carry out his duties, giving the opening address, attending the welcome party, chairing his session and closing the conference. The symposium was successful, as can be seen in this book. To our great regret, however, it will never be read by Dr. Kono, who was one of the most enthusiastic organizers of the symposium. A week after the meeting, he underwent surgery. It seemed successful, but, unfortunately, the cancer had metastasized to other organs including the liver and the brain. About four months later, on January 23rd, 1985, he passed away.

Dr. Kono's sudden death was a great shock to me. He had served as director of the Central Virus Diagnostic Laboratory, National Institute of Health, for nearly ten years, from 1972 to 1981, when I succeeded him. We shared many things, both in our professional and in our private lives. In particular, we worked closely together in virological and epidemiological study of acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis (AHC) and basic studies for clinical application of interferons. I respected him very much and loved his generous and noble character.

As the discoverer of AHC virus, he naturally had a strong interest in the origin of the virus and epidemiological research. In November, 1977, he organized a scientific research group to carry out an epidemiological investigation of this virus in West Africa, where the first outbreak of AHC occurred in 1969. I participated in the planning for this and spent over 50 days in West Africa on this scientific mission. AHC virus (enterovirus type 70) is naturally temperature-sensitive: it tends to grow at the relatively low temperature of around 33 °C, and it shows a particular tropism to the eyes, where the virus replicates to cause hemorrhagic conjunctivitis. Taking note of these characteristics, which are not shared by other human enteroviruses, Dr. Kono hypothesized that the fly had served as a vector to transmit the virus from eyes to eyes in the first large outbreak of the disease in West Africa. He further speculated that the virus might have been derived either from an animal picornavirus which had mutated to become pathogenic to humans

and was transmitted to human eyes by flies, or from an insect picornavirus replicating in flies. Although his hypothesis has not been proved yet – all our attempts to isolate AHC virus from African flies or cattle and to grow the virus in insect cell cultures have so far failed – his adventurous idea stimulated the imaginations of many scientists. One memory of him in Africa remains strongly with me. We were travelling on the Savanna at its hottest. Succumbing to the heat, I sat beneath a baobab tree and dozed off. When I awoke, I saw Dr. Kono out in the harsh sunlight, leisurely sketching women and children drawing water at a well. He was very fond of art, and after he retired from National Institute of Health he most enjoyed painting.

Dr. Kono was an excellent epidemiologist as well as one of the pioneers of clinical virology in Japan. He contributed greatly to the creation and development of a nationwide surveillance system for infectious diseases. He was a hard worker, and, with his profound knowledge and abundant experience, he had a great influence on many young virologists in this country.

During the last several years of his life he devoted himself with great enthusiasm to the progress of clinical study of interferon as General Chairman of the Interferon Scientific Committee (organized by the Ministry of Health and Welfare). In the future, probably within this year, a human natural fibroblast beta interferon is going to be approved as a first new biological drug in Japan. It is my great regret that he cannot see the fruits of his efforts, since I know that he was one of the few who was convinced of the benefits of appropriate use of interferon for the treatment of certain kinds of viral and malignant diseases.

In closing, I would like to say that I think we are all very grateful to Dr. Kono for the idea of bringing us together at the beautiful site of Oiso. I believe the scenic natural surroundings pleased all the participants and made the symposium especially memorable. I also wish to salute Mrs. Kono for her selfless devotion and personal courage in helping her husband to carry out his duties at the conference. I am sure that all participants will readily agree to join me in dedicating this book to the memory of the man who gave so much of himself for the sake of this symposium.

Shudo Yamazaki, M.D.

Director, Central Virus Diagnostic Laboratories

National Institute of Health

Tokyo, Japan

DEDICATION

Dr. Reisaku Kono

1915-1985

Dr. Kono, a giant in the field of virology and a world leader in virological research, has recently died and all of us mourn this great loss. Dr. Kono was born in Tokyo in 1915 and was graduated from Tokyo University in 1940. He worked at the Institute for Infectious Diseases, University of Tokyo and also for the Department of Virology of the National Institutes of Health in Japan, obtaining his Ph.D. in 1950. From 1952 to 1953, he studied in the United States at Johns Hopkins University, Yale University, and Harvard University as a Fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation, obtaining his Master's degree in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University in 1953. In 1958, Dr. Kono became Professor of the Department of Virology at Kyoto University, and Head of its Institute of Virology. He later became Head of the Department of Virology of the National Institutes of Health in Japan, and in 1969, became Chairman of the 18th Annual Meeting of the Society of Virology in Japan, and head of the investigation of subacute myelo-optico-neuropathy, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. From 1971 to 1981, Dr. Kono was a member of the Japan-United States Cooperative Medical Sciences Program Panel on Viral Disease. In 1980, he was president of the World Symposium on Interferon at Oiso, and in 1984 was president of the International Symposium on Pharmacological and Clinical Approaches to Herpes, Viruses and Virus Chemotherapy.

Dr. Kono did landmark research and made major contributions in the area of influenza virus and mumps virus. He developed a polio vaccine used in Japan, and found the causes of acute hemorrhagic conjunctivitis and subacute myelo-optico-neuropathy, as well as doing important work on Coxsackie virus.

Dr. Kono was respected for his brilliance and his creative work in virology. He was loved for his ability to organize, to stimulate students, to be fair and constructive, and to help the world wide advance of man's fight against viral disease. We will all sadly miss him, and we dedicate this work in his honor.

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DEDICATION

Dr. Reisaku Kono

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Dr. Kono. We did not know him personally prior to our meeting at the International Symposium on Pharmacological and Clinical Approaches to Herpes Viruses and Virus Chemotherapy in Oiso, Japan. However we felt on the basis of our correspondence, which concerned the many problems that evolve normally when such a meeting is being formulated, that he was a very kind, considerate, gentle understanding individual. Thus it was no surprise when we met him that our feelings about him were so correct. He did indeed possess all these wonderful characteristics which we had surmised from his letters to us.

His contributions to science have been of major importance and achieved for him international recognition not only as an outstanding investigator, but also as an exceptional patron of virology. He brought together virologists from all parts of the world and he represented Japanese virology at international meetings with dignity and dedication.

Thus we have lost not only a distinguished scientist, but equally as important a magnificent human being. He will be missed by all who knew him, and we feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity and honor to have known Dr. Kono, even though it was for such a brief period of time. To honor his memory these Proceedings are dedicated to him with great affection and admiration.

William Prusoff

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