OBITUARY

A tribute to Professor Wan-Yu Chen

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We announce with deep sadness the passing of Professor Wan-Yu Chen (Fig. 1) on March 4, 2015, at the age of 100 years.

Professor Chen was born in Taipei, Taiwan, on December 10, 1915. He graduated from Taipei Imperial University Medical School, Taiwan (the former name of National Taiwan University College of Medicine, NTUCM) and started his lifelong career in the affiliated hospital in 1942. He received his PhD degree in medicine from Kumamoto Medical University, Kumamoto, Japan, in 1948. He further studied nephrology in Duke University, Durham, NC, USA, from 1954 to 1955. Professor Chen was promoted to Professor of Medicine in NTUCM in 1956 and has since served as the Director of Department of Internal Medicine, Vice Superintendent of the National Taiwan University Hospital, and Chief Editor of the Journal of the Formosan Medical Association.

Professor Chen started his career as a nephrologist in 1953. In 1960, he established the renal biopsy assisted by two-point location under X-ray. This technique increased the success rate of renal biopsy to 95% before ultrasound was invented. He performed Taiwan’s first hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis in 1963 and 1964, respectively; founded the Toxicology Laboratory in 1966; and participated in the first successful kidney transplantation in Taiwan and Asia in 1968.

Professor Chen was a leading physician scientist with significant contributions to dialysis therapy and to the treatment of blackfoot disease, uremia, intoxication, hypertension, glomerulonephritis, hepatitis virus-associated nephritis, trace metal abnormalities in dialysis patients, etc. Among his works, “A Clinical Study of Blackfoot Disease in Taiwan, an Endemic Peripheral Vascular Disease” published in 1961, identifying drinking of artesian well water as the cause of blackfoot disease across the southwest coast of Taiwan, promoted the establishment of a public water supply system in this area. The study on the association between primary glomerulonephritis and hepatitis B virus, presented at the first Asian Pacific Congress of Nephrology (APCN) and third Asian Colloquium in Nephrology (ACN) in Tokyo, was selected as the most outstanding paper in 1979.

To support education and research in nephrology continuously, he promoted the establishment of the Ta-Tung Kidney Foundation (~1970), Professor Wan-Yu Chen Foundation (~1985), and Mrs Hsiu-Chin Lee Lin Kidney Research Foundation (~1994); presided in inter-hospital nephrology meetings since 1972; established the Society of Nephrology of the Republic of China in 1983 (the former name of Taiwan Society of Nephrology, TSN); and served as the first and second Society President (1983–1989). In 1997, he received TSN Award for his outstanding contributions.

Figure 1 Wan-Yu Chen (1915–2015).

Conflicts of interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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He was very active in participating and leading junior fellows in the academic affairs of international nephrology community. He promoted the affiliation of TSN with the International Society of Nephrology (1984), ensured that the seventh ACN (1987) and the eighth APCN (2000) were held in Taipei, Taiwan, and served as a Council Member of Asian Pacific Society of Nephrology (APSN; 1990–1992). For his outstanding contributions, Wan-Yu was honored with ACN and APSN Awards in 1989 and 1997, respectively.

Professor Chen, with his passion for humanity, exceptional wisdom, and extraordinary ambition in confronting disease and calamity, not only led the development of nephrology in Taiwan, but also played a significant role in Taiwan joining the international nephrology community. As the curtain fell on his life after a century of brilliance, let us all pay our highest respect to our beloved Professor Wan-Yu Chen.

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