

In Memoriam: Honorary Member Sadashige Sakuma, DVM, PhD, 1935-2010

The toxicologic pathology community has lost a dedicated colleague, Dr. Sadashige Sakuma, honorary member of the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathology and former professor of the Department of Veterinary Pathology, Osaka Prefecture University. After being hospitalized in early March 2010 due to an asthma attack, his health deteriorated, and he passed away on March 20th at the age of 75.



Dr. Sakuma graduated in 1960 from the Department of Animal Science and Veterinary Science, College of Agriculture, University of Tokyo, and immediately joined the Toda Institute, Tanabe Seiyaku Co., Ltd. (1960-1978). After working at the Takasaki Institute for General Research, Japan Upjohn Co., Ltd. (1978-1985) and the Takasaki/Tsukuba Institute for General Research, Upjohn Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (1985-1990), in September 1990 he assumed a post as a professor at the Department of Veterinary Pathology, Osaka Prefecture University. He retired in March 1999.

In 1974 he received his doctorate (Ph. D) from the Department of Agriculture, University of Tokyo with a dissertation titled "Experimental Pathological Study on Swine Erysipelas Infection". Building on that research, he worked vigorously to develop a variety of models for infectious, drug-induced, hereditary, and other kinds of diseases as well as researching their pathogenesis. In doing so, he hoped to establish toxicologic pathology and its application to the pharmacological evaluation of drug efficacy. His research findings were prolific. In addition, he shared his profound knowledge and wide-ranging insights in his interactions with undergraduates, graduate students, and researchers at the Osaka Prefecture University,

providing not only appropriate research guidance but also extensive advice that helped to build character. As a result, he launched a great number of promising people on their way in society.

During the time Dr. Sakuma was working for pharmaceutical companies, he served as a member of the Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturer Association's Safety Evaluation Committee and Drug Evaluation Committee, and as a member of the Drug Evaluation Committee's Standing Board of Directors and Chairman of its Basic Subcommittee. He was actively involved in toxicologic pathology from its early days in Japan, and he contributed to the development of safety research in the pharmaceutical industry. Also, because he continued teaching and researching toxicologic pathology with respect to safety assessment methods, he served as a councilor and director of the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathology and as an Educational Committee member and standing reviewer for the Japanese Society of Toxicology. His activities were highly regarded, and he was recommended to become a member of Great Britain's International Union of Toxicology and a Eurotox Registered Toxicologist, positions which he leveraged to become active on the international stage. He also served in many important posts, such as a councilor for the Japanese Society of Veterinary Science, a director of the Japanese Society of Veterinary Pathology, a councilor for the Japanese Society of Comparative Pharmacology and Toxicology, and a councilor for the Japanese Association for Laboratory Animal Science, and he made significant contributions to research in fields peripheral to toxicologic pathology.

The thalidomide disaster that occurred in 1961 led to heightened public interest in the safety of drug development in pharmaceutical industries, and the necessity and importance of toxicologic pathology and experimental pathology in particular began to be recognized. I have heard that around that time Dr. Sakuma devoted his youthful fervor to the establishment of toxicologic pathology, which plays an important role in the safety assessment of drugs in corporations. He can be considered a pioneering figure in toxicologic pathology. Based on that experience, Dr. Sakuma took every opportunity to communicate to us and to the community the importance of toxicologic pathology education and research in universities' veterinary education. A text expressing Dr. Sakuma's vision for the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathology was left behind in a publication called "Commemorating Dr. Sadashige Sakuma's Retirement", so I would like to share an excerpt from that here.

"While I was teaching at the Osaka Prefecture

University, I was fortunate enough to have many opportunities to be involved in the work of the academic societies I belonged to, such as the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathology, the Japanese Society of Veterinary Pathology, and the Japanese Society of Toxicology, and in work relating to professional accreditation carried out by the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathologists and the Japanese College of Veterinary Pathologists. The fact that through these events and this work, I was able to meet many researchers and scientists working on the front lines of not only the veterinary field but also the medical and pharmaceutical fields, was more than I could have dreamed of, and these peers served as a source of friendly competition. In the events pertaining to the academic societies, one of the things that left the greatest impression on me was the 11th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathology, held at the Osaka Prefecture University on January 26 and 27, 1995. Nine days before the meeting was to be held, in the early morning hours of January 17th, the tragedy of the great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake struck. Having spent more than a year preparing for the conference as the organizer, I worried myself to death for days over whether or not we should go ahead with the conference. When I heard the news that the Tokaido Shinkansen service between Tokyo and Kyoto had reopened, I decided to continue with the conference, and I contacted the board of directors and other parties involved. Some of the conference participants were affected by the disaster, and their grief was difficult to imagine. I hope I never have to make that sort of agonizing choice again. Participants west of the Kansai area ended up putting in a considerable amount of money and effort, but we had a lot of participants,

numbering more than half of our members, and we were able to complete the conference successfully.”

At that time when the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathology was under development, there were a number of young researchers who aspire to toxicologic pathology. Dr. Sakuma's desires to give a lot of opportunities for them and to nurture young researchers were memorable. He devoted himself to that and was constantly thinking about the future of toxicologic pathology. Personally, I got the opportunity to engage in teaching and research under Dr. Sakuma beginning in April 1992. As a young man, not only did I learn many things from him about life in general, but I was also able to vigorously push forward on my research, thanks to his creating an excellent research environment in the Department of Veterinary Pathology, Osaka Prefecture University. Moreover, despite Dr. Sakuma's easygoing appearance, his ability to judge people accurately (in other words, the ability to really nail down the essence of who they were and to nurture each and every student or researcher in the most suitable way for them) was outstanding, and I learned a lot from him in other areas of my life besides research (although I have certainly not reached his level). Dr. Sakuma's teachings and his sincere approach to research and education have without a doubt been passed along in my Department of Veterinary Pathology and to graduates who are working in the community at large.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Sakuma for his warm guidance and his occasional words of encouragement over the years, and to offer my sincerest condolences.

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