

IN MEMORIAM

Hiromichi Matsudaira (1928–2016)



Hiromichi Matsudaira, MD, PhD, passed away at age 88 on October 21, 2016. Dr. Matsudaira devoted his life to radiation sciences in Japan and internationally. He appeared to be a very serious and strict man but to the contrary, he was full of humor and kind thoughtfulness. Dr. Matsudaira was born in 1928 in Nagasaki prefecture, Japan. Soon after his birth his family moved to Chiba prefecture near Tokyo, where his father, a Buddhist priest, assumed a position in Kosho-ji temple. Dr. Matsudaira followed in his father's footsteps and became a Buddhism priest. His son has now succeeded him. His unique character involves: medical doctor, PhD biochemist, scientific administrator and Buddhist priest. Dr. Matsudaira graduated from the University of Tokyo Faculty of Medicine in 1952. He then entered a clinical internship, while, at the same time, pursuing training at Taisho University to become a Buddhist priest. He then joined the research staff of the Department of Biochemistry at Tokyo University, followed by two years studying biochemistry at the Universities of Paris and Strasbourg, and also enjoying young days in France. Returning to Japan, he became an instructor in the Department of Radiology of the University of Tokyo. At the invitation of the National Cancer Center in Tokyo, he became clinical staff of radiation therapy in 1962. In 1964, he became Chief of the Radiobiology Division. At NCC, he initiated important studies on repair of radiation-induced DNA double strand breaks in the rat whole body system.

In 1970, he moved to Chiba as Chief of the Biology Division of the National Institute for Radiological Sciences (NIRS), becoming the President of NIRS in 1988. His administrative work included founding the facility for cancer therapy, Heavy Ion Medical Accelerator in Chiba (HIMAC), where carbon ions are employed for cancer therapy. He also promoted basic research by NIRS staff and by invited international investigators, in studies of carcinogenic and hereditary effects of low dose and low dose rate radiation, biological effects of tritium and plutonium, and heavy ions in space biology. In addition, he contributed to the foundation of a new institute, the Institute of Environmental Sciences in Aomori prefecture for the study of cancer risk of environmentally relevant radiation at very low dose-rates. He was instrumental in establishing the value of radiobiology and radiation protection and cancer therapy in Japan by serving as President of the Japanese Radiation Research Society from 1973–1977.

In service to the Japanese government he served as a member of Atomic Energy Commission and Radiation Safety Advisory Committee, Radiation Council, Council for Science and Technology. He served the international community as a member of the ICRP main commission and of Committee 1, and as a delegate to UNSCEAR. After retirement from NIRS in 1993, he served as President of the Radiation Effects Association and as a member of the Board of Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF) in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He left much influence on our radiation research community including, as a mentor to dozens of radiation researchers. He was a pioneer in efforts to attract female researchers into radiation science. He accomplished much and affected many.

Dr. Matsudaira is survived by his wife, Saeko, sons Hiroataka, who succeeded him at the Buddhist temple, and Hiroto, and daughters Ryoko and Hisako.

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