

In memory of Ralph Steinman

On October 3rd of this year, we were excited to hear the news that Ralph M. Steinman had received the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his discovery of dendritic cells and their role in adaptive immunity. However, we were immediately in profound shock and grief by the news that he had passed away three days earlier from pancreatic cancer, which had troubled him for 4 years. The committee decided not to revoke the decision even though the Nobel Prize was awarded posthumously for the first time in history. We all welcome their decision with open arms, relieved that Steinman's achievement was finally well acknowledged and respected.

Dendritic cells were originally known to initiate immune responses, and they provide important innate and adaptive resistance mechanisms to infections and cancers. These features have made dendritic cells an attractive subject for many clinical studies. I believe that they are and will be the hub of future cell-based immunotherapy applications, which should be based on data from various aspects of basic research.

In my memory, Ralph paid meticulous attention to choosing the proper words to describe any scientific observations that he or his lab made. Furthermore, he never exaggerated the potential power of dendritic cells in various aspects of immunology in his numerous public speeches. Thus, when he described dendritic cells as "versatile controllers of the immune system" in his commentary for the Lasker Basic Medical Research Award in Nature (2007), I personally believed the gravity of the subject and, in fact, this discovery was what led him on the

path to the Nobel Prize.

Ralph was a passionate scientist; he was excited about interesting scientific results like a happy child over Christmas gifts, and science was the sole thing that occupied his mind. Despite his busy travel schedule, I do not remember him kicking back nor relaxing for longer than ten minutes when he returned; the very next morning my desk or mailbox would always fill up with recent publications and his kind memos, which I miss dearly. Among his numerous gifts as a scientist, I was always deeply impressed by his presentation skills. He delivered facts and significance smoothly with perfect fluency and logic with gentle charisma that the audience always responded to with heart-warming applause.

Ralph always appreciated the effort of and encouraged active collaboration among scientists involved in various research areas. The 51st General Session of the Korean Academy of Periodontology will be held on 26th November, and we shall always keep Ralph's values in our hearts.

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