

Obituary

In memoriam

Ichiro Yoshida (November 10, 1947–December 20, 2005):
Professor of Medical Education and Pediatrics,
Acting Director of Research Institute of Medical Mass Spectrometry,
Kurume University School of Medicine



Ichiro Yoshida, M.D., Ph.D. was suddenly struck by a heart attack on December 9, 2005 and passed away on December 20, 2005 at the age of 58. It is impossible to illustrate his professional career in a few pages, because his academic accomplishments are so extensive. He was an active member of both domestic and international scientific societies, including the Japanese Society for Biomedical Mass Spectrometry. He graduated from the Kurume University School of Medicine in 1976. After he had completed two years of pediatric residency, he started his research as a postgraduate student at the Kurume University School of Medicine and received his Ph.D. degree for work on experimental fatty metamorphosis of the liver induced by 4-pentenoic acid in rats. He then moved over to the Department of Pediatrics, University of California at San Diego, with Prof. William L. Nyhan and Prof. Larry Sweetman from 1981 through 1983, where he published some distinguished papers on disorders of organic acid metabolism and lactic acidosis. After his return to Japan, he was mainly involved in the care of patients with inborn metabolism deficiencies.

In 1991, he was appointed acting director of the Research Institute of Medical Mass Spectrometry, at the Kurume University School of Medicine. Shortly after his appointment, a pilot study was launched for neonatal mass screening for inborn metabolism deficiencies using urine specimens by gas chromatography–mass spectrometry, organized by the late Prof. Isamu Matsumoto. Dr. Yoshida, initially in collaboration with Prof. Matsumoto and later with Prof. Tomiko Kuhara, implemented the program in 1996 in Kurume. From 1996 until the

present, approximately 60,000 newborn babies were screened and approximately 60 patients with inborn metabolism deficiencies, including methylmalonic acidemia, propionic acidemia, ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency and so on, have been diagnosed. The number of newborns tested is the largest in Japan to date. In some cases, the test saved lives. Later on, in 2004, his laboratory introduced a tandem mass spectrometer and initiated the quantitative analysis of acylcarnitines and some amino acids. Thus, his laboratory has attained further refined diagnostic capability and has contributed much to regional screening and pediatric practice. He also contributed a great deal to the administration of the Japanese Society for Biomedical Mass Spectrometry as a board member of this Society.

In 2000, he was appointed Professor of Medical Education. He had been interested in medical education ever since he was a junior faculty member. Not only was he an excellent educator, but he also influenced numerous faculties at the Kurume University School of Medicine, as well as his disciplines all over Japan.

I have not yet said anything about Ichiro Yoshida as a person. He was a keen lover of his family, nature, books and art. His interest in books was not limited to medical subjects, but rather included a wide range of fields, including Japanese and Western classics, art and so on. The books he had collected could have filled a private library. Green plants and good music were also very important for him. His taste in classical music was highly refined. So much so, that his criticism on performances of Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonatas by various maestros was almost semiprofessional, and he himself was an excellent pianist. He will remain in our minds forever.

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