

Editorial



The other day my wife and I were entertaining a few friends at dinner. As usual, we served tea to our guests. Knowing I work on tea and cancer prevention, the topic quickly turned to the health benefits of tea. It is a public notation that tea is a healthy drink, but our guests were amazed at the level of understanding that scientists have come to grasp through laboratory investigations of how tea and its active components actually exert the biological functions.

As tea is one of the oldest and most consumed beverages in the world, its potential for improving human health has long been documented, dating back to ancient times. But only over the past two decades or so have scientists begun to actively investigate, using modern laboratory techniques, the effects of tea on various human diseases. The greater understanding of major human diseases at the molecular and cellular levels has fueled the research on tea as a potential dietary modifier of illnesses. Although most earlier studies focused on cancer, more and more attention has shifted to other conditions such as cardiovascular and hor-

mone disorders, diabetes, obesity and neurodegenerative diseases. In view of the swift advance in our knowledge of tea's versatile health benefits, this Special Issue – a comprehensive account of up-to-date laboratory studies – particularly relevant. Covering a broad range of diseases from cancer to obesity, this Issue addresses diverse topics in tea and human health. However, as you read the articles in this Issue, you will find many commonalities in the mechanisms of action of tea as well as in the research approaches taken in these studies. Our goal in this Issue is to increase awareness and help build a stronger scientific foundation for assessing the role of tea in the prevention of major diseases. We also hope that this Issue serves as a catalyst for investigators to develop new research projects. Since the surge in studies on cancer prevention by tea in the early 90s, consumption of both green tea and black tea has increased at a remarkable annual rate of 10% in the United States and 1% worldwide. Undoubtedly, scientists play a major role in educating the public through research findings about the potential health benefits of tea. Despite the progress in research over the years, there are still many questions waiting to be explored through laboratory and clinical studies. To move the field forward, it is vital that future research on tea be supported enthusiastically, with the cooperation of government agencies and private industries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Fung-Lung Chung'.

Fung-Lung Chung