

Obituary**In Honor of the Late Dr. Akio Suzuki**

It is with enormous regret that we announce the passing of Professor Emeritus Akio Suzuki.

He passed away on October 28, 2010, at the age of 80. A memorial ceremony in remembrance of Dr. Suzuki was held on December 18, 2010. The new lecture hall at the Tokyo Medical and Dental University was named after Dr. Suzuki for his outstanding contributions. It is now known as the “Akio Suzuki Memorial Hall.”

After he had graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at Tokyo Medical and Dental University in 1956, he proceeded with a one year internship at the Tokyo U.S. Army Hospital. Later, he left for the U.S.A. and began his surgical residency at the Albany Medical School. In 1958, he transferred to St. Vincent Charity Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. There, he accomplished outstanding achievements with Dr. Earle B. Kay. On May 4, 1960, he performed the world’s first successful aortic valve replacement using a tri-leaflet artificial valve made of Teflon® fabric covered with Polyurethane film. Then, he invented the low-profile Key-Suzuki disk valve, which was first clinically applied in 1962. In 1971, he became the Associate Professor of Mississippi University. Dr. Suzuki also showed his talent in the field of ischemic heart disease. He was also the first to report the use of bilateral ITA for CABG in 1973 (although his first successful case was in 1969). It is remarkable that he had already identified the best grafting technique of today in such early days of the CABG era.

In 1974, Dr. Suzuki returned to Japan and was appointed to be Professor of Thoracic Surgery at Juntendo University. There, he was able to continue to devote himself to the development of coronary artery surgery in Japan.

In 1983, he finally returned to Tokyo Medical and Dental University as Professor of Thoracic Surgery and by 1995, he was promoted to President of the University. Dr. Suzuki devoted 13 years of his late life to the development and reform of the University.

Dr. Suzuki was also one of the Honorary Editors of the Annals of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery. He always encouraged us to “do something original—something that would rewrite a textbook. Never be satisfied with your work that was accomplished at 90% effort. The rest of the 10% is what is more difficult to achieve, but more important. Let giving it your 110% be your motto in life.”

It is still quite difficult to believe that we shall never see him again. I am sure we are all saddened by this loss and share deep sympathy. The faculty is grateful to all who showed Dr. Suzuki kindness during his lifetime.



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