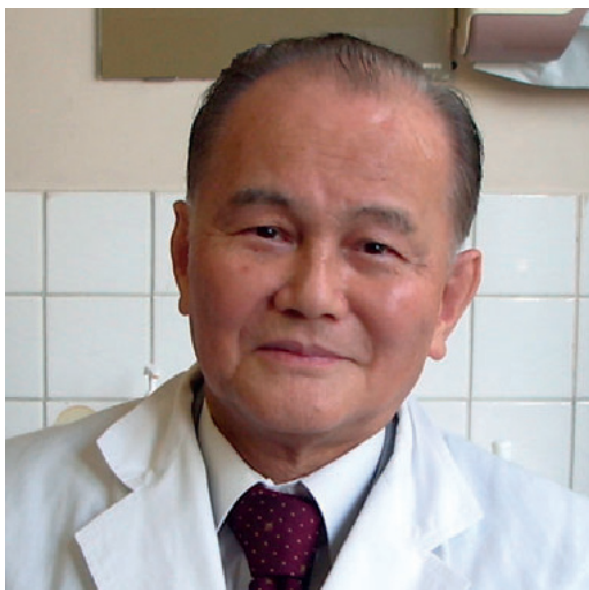




OBITUARY

Yutaka Honda, 1929–2009

Dr Yutaka Honda passed away on 1 September 2009. He was a pioneer and authority in the development of narcolepsy research. After he graduated from the School of Medicine, Tokyo University, he started studying neuropsychiatry in the Department of Neuropsychiatry, Tokyo University.

From the beginning of his medical career, he was very much interested in narcolepsy, and started a narcolepsy clinic in the 1950s. Thereafter he continued his lifelong research into narcolepsy. He received his PhD in 1959 with a doctoral thesis dealing with diencephalon-related psycho-neuro-endocrine disorders including narcolepsy. He and his collaborators found the marked effectiveness of imipramine (a tricyclic antidepressant) on cataplexy in 1960, and developed further pharmacotherapy for narcolepsy. He organized the NARCO-KAI, the Japan association of narcolepsy patients, in 1967.

He studied endocrinology at the Albany Medical Center, NY, and St. Louis University, MO, USA, during 1961–63 as a Fulbright exchange researcher. In 1969 he and his collaborators found that slow wave sleep-

related growth hormone release occurred in healthy subjects, but not in patients with narcolepsy-cataplexy.

An excellent achievement was his report of a tight association between human leukocyte antigen, HLA-DR and DQ, and narcolepsy-cataplexy syndrome. Dr Honda and his coworkers reported in 1983 that almost all the patients with narcolepsy-cataplexy have the same serotype, HLA-DR2. This finding triggered the genetic study of narcolepsy and other sleep disorders. He published a book in 1988 entitled *HLA in Narcolepsy*, which was the compilation of his clinical and research work on narcolepsy for the past 30 years. He organized the Fourth International Symposium on Narcolepsy in Tokyo in 1994. He also organized the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Japanese Sleep Research Society in Tokyo in 1997.

Dr Honda was proficient in English and as chief editor fostered scientific journals written in English including the *Japanese Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* and *Folia Psychiatrica Japonica* (now *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*). He also played the leading role in the translation into Japanese of the International Classification of Sleep Disorders, 1st and 2nd editions.

In 1985 he moved to Seiwa Hospital, the Neuropsychiatric Research Institute, Tokyo, where as the director, he worked energetically to reform and improve the hospital management, as well as continuing the narcolepsy clinic. He opened two sleep disorder clinics affiliated to the Neuropsychiatric Research Institute, the Suimin-Kokyu-Shougai Clinic in 1999 and the Yoyogi-Suimin Clinic, Japan Somnology Center in 2003. These sleep disorder centers have contributed to the promotion of sleep medicine in Japan.

He was a member of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and received an Early Significant Contributor Award at the Jubilee Reception of Associated Professional Sleep Societies (APSS) in Chicago in June 2003.

As mentioned above, Dr Honda was very active and capable in clinical and research activities in sleep medicine until he retired in 2008 because of his disease. We miss him deeply.

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