

In Memory of Professor Akira Nakajima

(1923 – 2017)



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Professor Akira Nakajima, a great international leader of ophthalmology, who was also instrumental in the growth and development of the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO).

From 1972 to 1976, Prof. Nakajima was the President of APAO. Subsequently, he was our longest-serving Secretary-General from 1976 to 1990. He received the José Rizal Medal in 1987 for his outstanding contributions to the development of clinical ophthalmology and great achievements in the prevention of blindness in the Asia-Pacific region.

The APAO Nakajima Award was established in 2005 in Prof. Nakajima's honor, and presented at the APAO Congress to young distinguished ophthalmologists from the Asia-Pacific region for their outstanding accomplishments in international ophthalmology.

Prof. Nakajima was a Professor at Juntendo University in Tokyo from 1961, where he was also Director of the Research Institute of Ophthalmology of Juntendo University. His vast clinical expertise and contributions were in the areas of cornea and external eye diseases, ocular genetics, and refraction, while his research interests also included molecular biological, immunological, and electrophysiological studies on chorioretinal degeneration, vitreous diseases, uveitis, and glaucoma. Throughout the decades, he has made unparalleled contributions to ophthalmic teaching and training, clinical and laboratory research, and clinical ophthalmic practice, in Japan, in the Asia-Pacific region, and well beyond.

In 1980s, Prof. Nakajima was the Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for the Prevention of Blindness in Tokyo, and founded the World Health Organization Pacific West Region Corporation Center for Blindness Control. He joined the Board of Trustees of the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) in 1982, later serving as ICO President from 1990 to 1998. He was awarded the very prestigious ICO Gonin Medal in 1986. Prof. Nakajima was also President of the Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis (AOI) from 1988 to 1990.

Professor Akira Nakajima passed away peacefully at the age of 93.

Prof. Akira Nakajima



At the 6th APAO Congress in Bali,
Indonesia in 1976



Prof. Akira Nakajima with Prof. Clement Tham,
the first recipient of the Nakajima Award, at WOC2014



At the 29th APAO Congress in conjunction with WOC2014 in Tokyo, Japan



From left to right, Makoto Araie, Akira Nakajima,
Bruce Spivey and Shigeru Takano at the 2014
World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC)

Messages in Honor and Remembrance of Professor Akira Nakajima

As the recipient of the inaugural APAO Nakajima Award back in 2005, and also as a successor to Prof Nakajima as the Secretary-General of APAO, Prof Nakajima has always been a great teacher, a giant in ophthalmology, and a role model to me in a most intimate and personal way.

Prof Clement Tham
APAO Secretary-General & CEO

On behalf of the Ophthalmological Society of Bangladesh, I would like to pay my deepest condolence on the sad demise of Prof Akira Nakajima. He was a great leader of APAO and also all over the world. May God bless his departed soul in peace and keep him in heaven.

Prof Ava Hossain
APAO Vice-President

As always, it is heartbreaking news that a great man passed away. Please accept my deepest condolences on the demise of Prof Nakajima. May God bless his soul in peace.

Dr Hyosook Ahn
APAO Treasurer

On behalf of the Cambodian Ophthalmological Society (COS), I would like to convey our deepest condolences for the passing of Prof Akira Nakajima. We here at COS are deeply saddened by the loss of such an amazing man. I am sure that the absence of Prof Nakajima would be felt by all working in the ophthalmological world. May his soul rest in peace.

Prof Pok Thorn
President, Cambodian Ophthalmological Society

On behalf of the Ophthalmological Society of Chinese Taipei, we express our deepest condolences on the sad demise of Prof Akira Nakajima. He was a great man and leader in APAO, and contributed immensely to the development of international ophthalmology and prevention of blindness. It is a big loss for all of us. May God rest his soul in peace.

Prof An-Guor Wang
Regional Secretary, Ophthalmological Society of Chinese Taipei

On behalf of the Ophthalmological Society of Chinese Taipei and myself, I am writing to express our heartfelt sympathy on this sad occasion. We respect Prof Nakajima very much as he was a man of wisdom, and sincerely thank him for his dedication to the field of ophthalmology for years.

Prof Lin-Chung Woung
President, Ophthalmological Society of Chinese Taipei

On behalf of the Hong Kong Ophthalmological Society, we would also like to join the APAO in expressing our sincerest condolences. Prof Nakajima has set forth a role model for us to follow. His visionary leadership, dedication to ophthalmic care, education, research, and prevention of blindness will echo in our hearts. RIP, Nakajima sensei.

Dr Dexter Leung
Regional Secretary, Hong Kong Ophthalmological Society

Prof Nakajima was a wise teacher and mentor, and was beloved by numerous students, fellows and colleagues. Moreover, he was an irreplaceable leader of the Japanese Ophthalmological Society (JOS) and played an immense role in facilitating communication and cooperation between the JOS and various societies and organizations abroad. However, we are most proud of the work that Prof Nakajima performed in the international arena of ophthalmology and eye care, in particular for the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) and the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO). Prof Nakajima showed us what can be achieved for the betterment of world vision with the right mix of talent, like-minded colleagues and sheer perseverance. We hope to build on his legacy by continuing to support the programs of the ICO, the APAO, and other global health initiatives.

Prof Tetsuro Oshika
President, Japanese Ophthalmological Society

The Korean Ophthalmological Society expresses our condolences. His contribution to our profession, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, has contributed to the advancement of medical knowledge and patient care. May he rest in peace.

Dr Hungwon Tchah
President, Korean Ophthalmological Society

We express our deepest sympathies to the family, friends and colleagues of the late Prof Akira Nakajima. Indeed he was a great visionary and contributed immensely to the development of APAO and also advancement of ophthalmology, especially prevention of blindness, in our region.

Dr Seng-Kheong Fang
Regional Secretary, Malaysian Society of Ophthalmology

My deepest condolences on the demise of Prof Nakajima. It's a big loss to all of us. May God rest his soul in peace.

Dr Bulgan Tuvaan
President, Mongolian Ophthalmologists' Society

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Prof Akira Nakajima. May his soul rest in peace.

Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh
Regional Secretary, Nepal Ophthalmic Society

On behalf of the Nepal Ophthalmic Society, I would like to convey our condolences on the sad demise of Prof Akira Nakajima. May his soul rest in peace.

Dr Suman Thapa
President, Nepal Ophthalmic Society

The Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology joins the entire APAO community in mourning the loss of Prof Akira Nakajima. His contribution to our profession has contributed to the advancement of patient care but likewise the professional development of his colleagues. May he rest in peace.

Dr Sherman Valero
President, Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology

On behalf of the College of Ophthalmologists, Singapore and the Singapore Society of Ophthalmology, we would also like to express our sincerest condolences. Prof Nakajima was instrumental in the early days of APAO to provide sterling leadership in clinical care, education, research, and in the ultimate goal of prevention of blindness.

Prof Tien Yin Wong and A/Prof Shu-Yen Lee
Singapore Society of Ophthalmology

Please accept our deepest sympathies. It is indeed an irreparable loss not only to the Asia-Pacific region but to the whole world. May Prof Nakajima attain inner peace.

Dr Madhuwanthi Dissanayake
President, College of Ophthalmologists of Sri Lanka

On behalf of all members of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists of Thailand, we are writing to deliver our heartfelt condolences on the passing away of Prof Akira Nakajima, a former President and Secretary General of the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO). We deeply realize that Prof Nakajima had always served as an extraordinary leader and was a mainstay of the APAO for many years. We would like to express our deepest sympathies and sadness to his family and his colleagues for the great loss.

Dr Anuchit Poonyathalang
President, Royal College of Ophthalmologists of Thailand

It's terrible to know the passing of a great leader and an outstanding ophthalmologist not only in the Asia-Pacific region but throughout the world. The works and memories of Prof Nakajima will always remain in our hearts. May his soul rest in peace.

Dr Reynaldo Javate
Subspecialty Society Representative, Asia-Pacific Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

A great loss to the world of science, ophthalmology and the Asia-Pacific region. Pray his soul rest in peace.

Dr Taraprasad Das
President, Asia-Pacific Vitreo-retina Society

On behalf of the Indonesian Ophthalmologists Association and personally, please accept our deepest empathy to the loss of Prof Akira Nakajima. He will remain in our memory for his wisdom, flamboyant and yet very scientific thinking. May he rest in peace.

Dr Tjahjono D Gondhowiardjo
APAO Councilor-at-Large

Dr Nakajima brought a lot of honour to the region with his pathbreaking work. He will always live in our memories. May his soul rest in peace.

Dr Ashok Grover
APAO Councilor-at-Large

Please accept my deepest condolences on the demise of Prof Nakajima. He was a great human being and a tall personality in international ophthalmology. It is a big loss to all of us. May God rest his soul in peace.

Prof Rajvardhan Azad
Chair, APAO Ophthalmic Education Standing Committee

We have lost another giant ophthalmologist of our region. May his soul rest in peace.

Prof Paisan Ruamviboonsuk
Congress President, APAO 2019

I had the great privilege of working closely with Akira from the 1980s in his capacity as Director of the WHO Collaborating Center for the Prevention of Blindness in Tokyo. Our friendship and his mentorship continued as I became more involved with the ICO. He was immensely wise and patient and had an unexpected and cheeky smile. His contributions over time to ophthalmology cannot be overestimated.

Prof Hugh Taylor
President, International Council of Ophthalmology

I had the pleasure to work closely with Akira in both the AOI and in the ICO (as his Secretary-General from 1994-98). He was an intense worker and inveterate traveler and a kind individual. He re-elevated Japanese ophthalmology onto the world scene, following World War II.

Dr Bruce Spivey
Immediate Past President, International Council of Ophthalmology