

In Memory of Prof. Hyung-Woo Kwak



It is with immense sadness that we announce the passing of Professor Hyung Woo Kwak, MD, PhD, President-Elect of the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO) and Vice-President of the Asia-Pacific Vitreo-retina Society (APVRS), on January 1, 2016. In his battle against liver cancer, Prof. Kwak had never stopped for a moment leading the advancement of ophthalmology in Korea, the Asia-Pacific region, and well beyond.

Prof. Kwak received his early training in retina at the Seoul National University, and completed his research fellowship at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary in Boston in the 1990's. He joined the Department of Ophthalmology of Kyung Hee University School of Medicine in 1986, and was a Professor of Ophthalmology for over 30 years and served as Chairman from 1997 – 2003. During his tenure, he trained innumerable ophthalmology fellows who now serve as Professors in various university hospitals nationwide. Prof. Kwak was also a prolific researcher with over 160 peer-reviewed journal articles. With his pioneering work in retinal research, Prof. Kwak was one of the key leaders in the development of the retina subspecialty in Korea, firmly placing Korea on the map of international ophthalmology with worldwide recognition. Prof. Kwak was Past President of many important professional societies in Korea, including the Korean Retinal Society (2006-2008), the Korean Ophthalmological Society (KOS) (2010-2012), and the Korea Uveitis Society (2013-2015).

Prof. Kwak was an active player in the international ophthalmic community. Prof. Kwak hosted the 27th APAO Congress 2012 in Busan, South Korea, as Congress President, bringing together over 4,000 delegates from all over the world. He was elected a Vice-President of APAO in 2012 – 2014, and then elected the President-Elect of APAO in 2015. He had also served as a Vice-President of APVRS since 2013.

Prof. Kwak was instrumental in the success of the 3rd APVRS Congress in Busan, and the successful bidding of the 12th APVRS Congress in Seoul in 2018. Prof. Kwak participated actively in many international professional organizations, including the American Association of Ophthalmology (AAO), the American Society of Retina Specialists (ASRS), the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), and the EURETINA, as an international member. Prof. Kwak had also been a member of the Macular Society since 2012.

Prof. Kwak received the Arthur Lim Award from APAO in 2013, in recognition of his exemplary leadership in the field of ophthalmology. With his dedication, Prof. Kwak made substantial improvements in ophthalmic teaching and training in Korea and beyond.

Prof. Kwak is survived by his wife Eun-Sook Youm and his children Jae-Young and Dong-Hoon.

Messages in Honor and Remembrance of Professor Hyung-Woo Kwak

International ophthalmology and particularly ophthalmology in the Asia-Pacific region is much the poorer for the untimely loss of Prof Hyung-Woo Kwak. A great leader of Korean ophthalmology, Prof Kwak was also very gracious and insightful.

As the incoming President of the APAO, Prof Kwak had so much to offer us all. All those of you who attended the APAO Congress in Busan will long remember his generous hospitality and good humor.

Prof Hugh Taylor
President, International Council of Ophthalmology

Prof Hyung-Woo Kwak will be remembered for his outstanding contribution to ophthalmology in the Asia-Pacific region. He was a leader in academic ophthalmology in South Korea and it is a great loss that he was not able to take on the position of APAO President due to his untimely death.

I served with Prof Kwak on the APAO council for many years and was always impressed by his wise counsel on difficult matters. Those who were in Busan for the APAO Congress will always remember his friendship and wonderful hospitality. Prof Kwak will be missed by his family, colleagues and friends.

Prof Frank Martin
President, Asia-Pacific Strabismus and Paediatric Ophthalmology Society

We will always remember Prof Kwak as an outstanding clinician scientist who made a great contribution to regional and global ophthalmology. He was a true friend, always kind and considerate. We are indeed privileged to have met and worked with him.

Jan-Tjeerd de Faber and Stefan Seregard
European Society of Ophthalmology

On behalf of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the Global Alliances Secretariat, I want to express our deepest condolences to the family of Prof Hyung-Woo Kwak, the Korean Ophthalmological Society and the Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology on the loss of a very special person and one of your most esteemed colleagues and dedicated leaders.

I first met Prof Kwak about 8 years ago during one of my early trips as visiting professor to Korea. I found him to be a delightful and engaging individual, as well as an inspiring and brilliant clinician and researcher. In 2012, as President of the AAO, I attended the APAO Congress in Busan. Prof Kwak was the consummate host and made me feel most welcome as an honored guest. He always demonstrated a unique kindness and warm spirit that made all guests feel welcome.

I was very pleased when Prof Kwak was selected to become the President-Elect of APAO. He would have made a superb president. His untimely passing is a loss to not only the Korean and Asia-Pacific ophthalmic communities, but also to the international community, and he will be missed. His legacy as a talented leader and educator, as well as his many important scientific contributions to our profession, will endure for future generations.

Richard L. Abbott
Secretary for Global Alliances