



Dr. SABURO SUZUKI

Obituary

Dr. SABURO SUZUKI, Professor of Ohtsuma Women's University passed away on December 30th, 1987, at the age of sixty-seven. It is a great loss and sadness to all. He was a contributor to The Journal of Antibiotics and served effectively on the Editorial Board of this journal for twenty years.

Those of us who knew him well will associate SABURO SUZUKI with the personality of uncommon patience, gentleness and modesty. He was a quiet-spoken, thoughtful man, always striving for excellence, enthusiastic concern for the welfare of his colleagues, friends, and students, and sincere respect for elders.

SABURO SUZUKI was born on July 23, 1920 in Tochigi Prefecture. He was educated at the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Agricultural Science and graduated with a B.S. degree in 1944. After several years research experience at the university, he moved to the Antibiotics Laboratory, the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research (formerly Scientific Research Institute), Tokyo in 1954, where the late Professor YUSUKE SUMIKI was director of the laboratory. Since then SABURO SUZUKI devoted twenty-four years to antibiotic research. He received a Doctor of Agriculture Degree from the University of Tokyo in 1960 for his outstanding work on a nucleoside antibiotic, tubercidin. He succeeded Professor SUMIKI's position at the institute in 1962, and became the head of the Antibiotics Laboratory. In 1978, he became Professor of Ohtsuma Women's University, where he was engaged in scientific education for more than ten years.

In the 1950's, SABURO SUZUKI focused his interest on antituberculosis antibiotics. For this purpose, he and his co-workers devised a convenient and sensitive assay method using *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* BCG. Thus, he discovered homomycin, tubercidin, nebularine, toyocamycin, tubermycins, questiomycins and tuberin. Among these antibiotics, tubercidin received much attention because of the unique pyrrolopyrimidine nucleoside structure and the remarkable inhibitory activity on nucleic acid synthesis. The compound is still widely used as an important biochemical reagent.

Afterwards he also initiated studies on antitumor antibiotics, and discovered primocarcin and cervicarcin which are effective on Ehrlich ascites carcinoma.

In 1962 he began to search for antibiotics which would prevent rice sheath blight, a serious disease of rice plants caused by *Rhizoctonia solani*. Through this research he discovered that *Streptomyces*

cacaoi subsp. *asoensis* produced a nucleoside peptide antibiotic, polyoxin A. Later, a number of members of the polyoxin family were isolated and their structures and biological activities were extensively investigated. He elucidated that polyoxins are specific inhibitors of fungal cell wall chitin synthesis and because of this property, they have no toxicity to plants and animals. The discovery evoked the wide concern on chitin synthesis as a target of insecticide as well as fungicide. In 1968, polyoxins went into market in Japan and since then have been widely used as an excellent agricultural fungicide not only for rice but also fruits and vegetables.

SABURO SUZUKI was a recipient of a number of honors including the Japan Academy Prize (Nippon Gakushiinsho) 1974, Okochi Memorial Prize 1971, Japan Agriculture Prize (Nihon Nogakusho) 1971.

Always heavily involved in his scientific profession, he carried out editorial duties for The Journal of Antibiotics and served as a president of Kanto Branch of Japan Agricultural Chemical Society, 1977~1979.

Science has lost a finest investigator and his warm humanity will be missed by all. Our deepest sympathies are extended to Mrs. SUMIKO SUZUKI.

(KIYOSHI ISONO)