

In Memoriam



Masaki Takeuchi, MD, PhD
1981-2024

Dr Masaki Takeuchi sadly passed away at the very early age of 43 on 20th September 2024 in France. He was Associate Professor at the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science, Yokohama City University Graduate School of Medicine, Japan, and he became ill during a short visit to University of Strasbourg, France, a collaborative research meeting before continuing his travel to Marrakech, Morocco to be able to attend the 20th International Conference of Behçet's Disease (ICBD). Unfortunately, on the morning of 16th September 2024, he experienced severe nosebleeds and subcutaneous bleeding, leading to his urgent admission to the hospital. Despite continued treatment, he suffered a brain haemorrhage on 18th September 2024, and, sadly, he passed away two days later. His wife Mariko, and his colleagues, Professor Akira Meguro and Dr Satoko Kikuchi, were with him in his final moments.

He was a dear friend and colleague, who made very important contributions to the field of Behçet's disease, uveitis and other areas of Ophthalmology in a very short time. After his training as an MD/PhD in Ophthalmology at the Yokohama City University School of Medicine, he joined Dr Dan Kastner's laboratory at the National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institutes of Health, USA as a postdoc in November 2012. He had a strong interest in Behçet's disease and he was involved in several studies which played a critical role in the clarification of genetic mechanisms associated with the tendency to this complex disorder with unique autoinflammatory and autoimmune features until he left the NIH in 2017. He was the first-author of the ImmunoChip analysis of a large Turkish and Japanese cohort of patients with Behçet's disease, in which he demonstrated the role of role of innate immunity and host mucosal barrier function in the pathogenesis of Behçet's disease in association with several novel genetic variations this study identified. He also wrote an extremely influential review with Dr Elaine Remmers on the genetic basis of Behçet's disease. Upon his return to Yokohama City, Dr Takeuchi took a faculty

position in the Department of Ophthalmology, and he continued his studies of the genetics of Behçet's disease. He also took the lead in developing the clinical practice guidelines for Behçet's disease in Japan, contributing to the establishment of standard treatments. Furthermore, he was crucial in launching a national registry in Japan to collect clinical and genomic data from patients with Behçet's disease. Just a month ago Dr Takeuchi and his family visited Washington, DC, to plan an extended collaboration combining data he had previously collected at the NIH with new data that he accrued upon his return to Japan. He was also very active in other areas of ophthalmology and he carried out several studies which were published in very prestigious journals.

Dr Takeuchi was very industrious and cooperative, and he was instrumental in several collaborative studies which involved several investigators from different parts of the world. During the ICBD in Marrakech, we and other colleagues from various centers mentioned his work several times, such as the ERAP1 haplotype analyses and ImmunoChip studies, by which he had an impact on our understanding of Behçet's disease far out of proportion to his short life. We were aware of Dr Takeuchi's travelling to the ICBD, and when we noted his absence at the meeting, we just assumed that he had run into a last-minute conflict that prevented him from attending. When we got the sad news on the way back home from the conference, it reminded us, just how precious life is, and how important our personal interactions are to the work we do.

Masaki is survived by his wife, Mariko, and three children, Sana, Soshi and Shiho. He will be remembered by his family, his colleagues in Japan, and his friends throughout the Behçet's disease community worldwide. We will miss him dearly.

Daniel L. Kastner
Akira Meguro
Ahmet Gül