



## Eulogy for Professor Chua Kaw Yan

by Lee Bee Wah

*In loving memory of Professor Chua Kaw Yan (1954-2011)*

It is with much sadness that we announce the untimely passing of a close friend and colleague and one of Asia's scientific stalwarts in the discipline of Allergy. Professor Chua was a well-respected and well-liked senior member of our allergy fraternity. Her dedication and commitment to science provided a strong and lasting bond with her colleagues and graduate students in Singapore, where she held the position of Research Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS), and Taiwan, where she held a joint appointment at the Graduate Institute of Immunology, National Taiwan University.

Professor Chua completed her PhD in Microbiology in 1984 from the Massey University, New Zealand. She did her postdoctoral training at the Child Health Research Institute, Western Australia and initiated her own research group as an Associate Professor at the National Taiwan University in 1993. She joined the Department of Paediatrics in the National University of Singapore in 1997, first as a Senior Research Fellow; she rose to the position of Research Professor in 2004.

Over the years, she mentored many graduate students who themselves have become experts in their own fields. She often said '*my students are my family*'. Indeed her 'extended family' extended to clinicians and scientists all around Asia (including Australia), where she fulfilled her mission in teaching which was, and I quote, '*to train and nurture a young generation of scientists with integrity, passion and high self-esteem*'. She recognized the value of teamwork and appreciated the worth of each member of her team.

Professor Chua approached all her research projects with passion, commitment and intellectual rigor and honesty. As a strong advocate of sharing research knowledge, she published over a hundred journal articles and has 19 patents under her name. Professor Chua achieved several other research milestones for which the scientific community is indebted.

- Whilst working with Professor Wayne R Thomas in Western Australia, Professor Chua cloned the first dust mite allergen, Der p 1, from Chua and her team subsequently cloned and fully characterized seven other important mite allergens from *Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus*. Some of these publications are among the most frequently cited papers in the field of allergens and allergy research.
- Professor Chua also led pioneering proof of concept work of using the allergen gene vaccination approach to inhibit allergen-specific IgE and Th2 response in mice.

- Her team also did important work showing that the mite, *Blomia tropicalis*, is an important dust mite allergen in tropical and subtropical Asia. These mite allergens are now recognized as essential for allergy diagnosis in this region.

Professor Chua – mentor, researcher, colleague, friend - will be dearly missed, but her legacy will live on through her students and her work. Her generosity and warmth will continue live in the hearts of all her friends and colleagues. We extend our deepest sympathies to her husband, Mr Yap Foo Chee, her daughter, Chengxin, and her family, and share in their loss.