

Kenji Tadokoro, M.D., Ph.D.



Kenji Tadokoro was born on April 14, 1947 in Sapporo Japan. He graduated from Tokyo University School of Medicine in 1973. He worked as a senior resident and subsequently a research associate in the Dept. of Medicine and Physical Therapy of Tokyo University Hospital from 1973 to 1981, focusing his research on the mechanisms of allergic reactions. From 1981 to 1984 Kenji was a Research Fellow, Institute of Clinical Immunology at the University of Bern, Switzerland. He returned to Japan in 1984 as a Research Associate in the post-graduate Division of the School of Medicine at the University of Tokyo and Tokyo University Hospital where he earned his PhD degree in 1992.

In 1992 he joined the Japanese Red Cross (JRC) Central Blood Center in Tokyo as the Director of Research. Since then he has worked diligently on improving donor screening systems for infectious diseases within the JRC and internationally including establishing the hemovigilance department in 1993. He served as an Executive Officer since 2004, and was appointed Chief Executive Officer for Blood Services in 2014, which he retained until early 2017.

Although he made many other contributions in the areas of blood services management, transfusion-related GVHD and hemovigilance, Kenji's career was highlighted by his leadership in the rational introduction of new donor screening assays, focusing on the introduction of nucleic acid testing (NAT). Step by step, based on modeled projections, pilot studies and observed yield, he advanced on-going implementation and demonstrated the efficacy of NAT, which successfully decreased the risk of transfusion-related HIV, HBV and HCV in Japan. The hemovigilance department he established, includes a large specimen repository, likely the largest in the world, enabling unique look-back studies confirming transfusion transmission, documenting their rates and establishing correlates and linkage to disease outcomes. The program has shown the importance of a comprehensive blood testing and patient outcome system in improving blood safety. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed articles informing the global transfusion medicine community of the implications of the JRC research findings.

Kenji enthusiastically nurtured warm relationships with international colleagues engaged in blood programs. He invited staff from many Asian countries to JRC for training and was instrumental in convening Red Cross and Red Crescent symposia in the Asian region every three years. He chaired the Asia Pacific Blood Network (APBN) for four years until 2017, and also held a position of the Zone Coordinator of the Global Advisory Panel of Blood Services in Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. He was a very active member of the AABB and ISBT and other related societies (IPFA/PEI), attending many Congresses and participating in numerous working parties and committees. Through these activities, he continued to express the opinions of an Asian country both scientifically and related to policy.

Kenji resigned as CEO of JRC in 2017 due to health reasons, and assumed a special senior advisor role for the JRC blood program. Kenji passed away on the October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Those who knew him will cherish his memory as a man of integrity, earnestness and kindness, and a great leader of the JRC and international community. He was a friend and cherished colleague; his wisdom and fellowship will be sorely missed.