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In memoriam. Thomas Starzl, M.D., Ph.D.

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Figure1. Thomas Starzl, M.D., Ph.D.

It is with sadness that we learned passing of Dr. Thomas Starzl. For patients who were treated by him, and medical professionals who were trained by him, his loss has deep meanings. In 1963, while working at the University of Colorado, Dr. Starzl performed the world's first liver transplant. He also performed the first successful liver transplant in 1967. At that time, it was widely believed that allogenic (non-identical) human kidneys could not be transplanted, but Dr. Starzl succeeded in this attempt in 1962 and 1963 by combining azathioprine and corticosteroids in allogenic kidney transplants. This opened the way for a long series of kidney transplants and gave new impetus to clinical attempts throughout the world. Dr. Starzl's achievements during his lifetime have touched not only his immediate surroundings but have had a very wide halo effect. This halo effect has to do with generating a new medical field altogether from almost a scratch. For those of us in the field of transplantation, his lifetime contributions has determined our careers and passion, even for those who have never met him, talked to him or worked with him. Indeed, organ transplant professionals share the common passion of taking care of patients with organ failure. We consider what we do each and every day not just as a job but as a passion. This passion comes from the fact that we take care of patients with dire medical problems, because many unknowns about human body still exist and the fact that we are fortunate to see a rapid change in patients after successful transplants. Patients' and their families' smiles and gratitude fuel us each and every day. If, today, we are able to help patients in organ failure, this is because of Dr. Starzl's passion and lifetime work that started in 1950s. His vision, passion, and determination overcame many predicted and unpredicted obstacles along the way. His passion to solve problems in a scientific and systematic way opened a whole new field. His contributions specifically to liver transplant are widely recognized as he understood technical difficulties and was able to eliminate technical barriers for a successful liver transplant. However, his contributions to organ transplant field in general are as important. His work in organ rejection, immunosuppression to prolong life of a transplanted organ deserves highest praise. Dr. Starzl served as chief of transplant services at the Presbyterian University Hospital (now UPMC Presbyterian), Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (now Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC) and the Veterans Administration Hospital in Pittsburgh. He oversaw the largest transplant program in the world. Then he took the title of director of the University of Pittsburgh Transplantation Institute, which was renamed the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute in 1996. Since 1996, Dr. Starzl has obtained the titles of Dis-

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tinguished Professor of Surgery in the University of Pittsburgh and director emeritus of UPMC's Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute.

Merely recognizing Dr. Starzl for his contributions in the field of transplantation is not enough. To continue his legacy, as transplant professionals, we need to walk on his footsteps with the same unwavering passion he had. We need to identify and support young minds who will lead us to better outcomes, better quality of life for our patients. In order to advance what he started, we need to invest in current technologies to treat diseases at cellular level and at earlier stages for the benefit of our patients. Only then, we will be able to honor Dr. Starzl and his lifetime work.

It will be a challenge for the new generations to match the creativity and talent of Dr. Starzl. At the Editorial Board of *Annals of Hepatology* we feel honored to render this tribute to him.

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