



CIRUGÍA ESPAÑOLA

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Obituary

In Memoriam



Dr. Thomas E. Starzl, pioneer in liver transplantation, passed away on March 4th at his home in Pittsburgh (USA). He studied medicine in Chicago, completing his residency in surgery at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. In 1961, he transferred to the University of Colorado, Denver, as Associate Professor in surgery, to later become the Department Chair from 1972 to 1980. At that hospital, he performed the first liver transplantation in the world in 1963 and, in 1967, the first successful liver transplantation. In spite of the important worldwide pessimism about the technical and immunological possibilities for transplanting a human liver, his knowledge and determination were essential for overcoming initial failures, all the while developing a surgical expertise that enabled him to save the lives of thousands of patients with terminal liver disease. In 1981, he transferred to the University of Pittsburgh as Professor of Surgery and headed an outstanding team that made the hospital a world renowned institution, because of which hundreds of surgeons were trained there in liver transplantation. At retirement, he was named Director of the University of Pittsburgh Transplantation Institute, which was renamed the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute in 1996.

Starzl was a pioneering legend in surgery, a magnificent physician, and an even better person. His intuition, energy and

leadership were key to his achieving the most incredible objectives in medicine. His work in transplantations and immunology has given hope and life to an endless number of patients, and his teaching in these disciplines has extended his mastery to surgeons and researchers worldwide. Starzl was proposed for the Nobel Prize in Medicine and received more than 200 prizes and honors, including the National Medal of Science, which is the highest scientific honor bestowed by the President of the United States, and the International Transplantation Society Peter Medawar Prize. He was invested as Doctor *Honoris Causa* at 26 different universities and made Honorary Member of 60 different professional and scientific organizations. He was on the editorial committees of 40 medical publications and was author or coauthor of more than 2200 scientific articles, 4 books and 300 book chapters.

Tom Starzl dedicated his life to patient care and made advances in the field of medicine that would be unimaginable for most. With a combination of extraordinary talent and determination, he was able to build an unparalleled professional career as surgeon, visionary researcher, prolific scholar and the most influential teacher in the organ transplantation field. A man of incomparable intellect, passion and valor, he converted his tremendous respect and affection for his patients into the driving force behind his career, opening a new frontier in science that would forever change the face of modern medicine. Starzl will be remembered for many things, although perhaps the most important is the countless lives that he has saved through his groundbreaking work.

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