

**Academician Dušan T. Kanazir
(1921-2010)**

UDC 577:929 Kanazir D.



Academician Dusan T. Kanazir was born on June 28, 1921, in the village of Mosorin, in the region Novi Sad, Serbia. He completed primary and secondary school in Novi Sad and in 1939 he enrolled into the Belgrade School of Medicine. After four years hiatus during the Second World War, Professor Kanazir continued his medical studies at l'Ecole medicale – Faculte de Medicine, University of Paris, France, after which he returned to Yugoslavia where he obtained a Medical Degree at the School of Medicine of the University of Belgrade. He gained his PhD degree in 1955 at l'Universite libre de Bruxelles, Belgium.

Professor Kanazir started his academic career as an assistant professor at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Pharmacy in 1957. He was promoted to associate professor after transferring to the Department of Biology at the same University in 1962. Here, he achieved full professorship (professor of biochemistry) in 1968. He also gave lectures on the Molecular Biology of the Cancer Cell to postgraduate students. He was a mentor to more than 40 PhD and MSci students.

As a great visionary, Professor Kanazir played a pivotal role in the establishment of a novel study program, “Molecular Biology and Physiology”, at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Science in 1972. He was the founder and first Head of the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Chair and he appointed the most prominent researchers from scientific institutes outside the University to facilitate the optimal realization of the aforementioned study program. To achieve this, he also invited world-renowned scientists from abroad. Simply said, he spearheaded the efforts to develop the School of Molecular Biology at the University of Belgrade and make it an institution whose success would resonate throughout the world. He successfully realized this goal, as is illustrated by the stellar reputation of graduates of the School of Molecular Biology in laboratories throughout the world. Academician Kanazir retired as a professor in 1987.

Professor Kanazir was the founder of the Laboratory of Biology in the Institute of Nuclear Sciences “Vinca” where he conducted his research from the beginning of his career

in 1949 until retirement. His first research interests were oriented towards the elucidation of the molecular mechanisms underlying the effects of irradiation on living systems, i.e. the effect of irradiation on the synthesis of nucleic acids and on the genetic consequences of irradiation. His publications in the years 1951-1953 on breast cancer and in 1957 on the mutational effect of irradiation during cell division are still cited.

He completed a number of specializations abroad. In the period 1951-1953 he was a member of the Laboratoire de Pasteur, l'Institute du Radium in Paris, France, working with Prof. A. Lacassagne on experimental carcinogenesis. Following this, he spent two years (1953-1955) in the Laboratoire de Morphologie Animale, Universite libre de Bruxelles with Prof. J. Brachet, working on the influence of UV irradiation on the metabolism of nucleic acids. After an invitation from Prof. M. Demerec in 1955, he accepted a postdoctoral position where he studied the molecular genetics of bacteria at the Centre of Genetics, Carnegie Institute of Washington, Cold Spring Harbor, USA. He was also invited by Prof. S. Cohen to be a visiting professor of Molecular Genetics of Bacteria at the Department of Biochemistry, University of Pennsylvania, USA, and tenured as a visiting professor at the Universite libre de Bruxelles in Belgium in 1964 and 1968. In 1975-1976 he was an invited professor for the European Society of Microbiology working on the project “Mutagenic Effect of Carcinogenic Compounds” in the Prof. M. Errera laboratory at the same University.

His scientific interests were very broad and included both prokaryotic and eukaryotic organisms. He studied the molecular genetics of *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella typhimurium*, in particular the molecular underpinnings of mutagenesis in these bacteria. His pioneer work on the structure and molecular mechanisms of steroid hormone receptors is highly regarded in the scientific community. Moreover, his scientific interest was also in molecular mechanisms of the role of psychosocial stresses on the pathogenesis of cancer, cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases. More than 450 publications in leading scientific journals and the contribution of numerous book chapters exemplify the no-

table scientific career of Professor Kanazir.

In 1961, Professor Kanazir was elected to be a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA) and in 1968 he was nominated to be an Academician in the same Academy. He filled the following positions in the SASA: Vice-President from 1971 to 1981, President from 1981 to 1994 and president or member of various scientific boards. During his presidency, Professor Kanazir initiated many scientific projects with the active participation of a number of scientists who were not members of the Academy. He always insisted on the establishment of closer links between the Academy and other scientific institutes as well as with universities.

Academician Kanazir was a member of the Indian National Science Academy and the Athens Greece Academy.

In parallel with his scientific activities, Professor Kanazir had a myriad of prominent roles in our society. To name a few, he was a vice-president of the Yugoslav Section of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, president of the Scientific Council of the Republic of Serbia and Minister of Science of the Republic of Serbia.

One of Professor Kanazir's exceptional traits was his open-mindedness and readiness to communicate with his collaborators. He always enthusiastically provided willing assistance to his collaborators if they encountered problems in their experimental work. Moreover, he was always ready to discuss strategies for the successful solving of complicated scientific conundrums. I personally was privileged and honored to work with Professor Kanazir. Our conversations and discussions about science and the knowledge garnered from my professor Kanazir was an unforgettable experience. I shall always remember his invaluable suggestions and helpful comments, especially those we had during our stay at the Universite libre de Bruxelles.

He is not with us anymore, but he will forever stay in our hearts and fond memories. Even more importantly, future molecular biology graduates will carry on his legacy.

HE WHO DIES AND DEATH DID NOT PUT HIM BEHIND, BECOMES IMMORTAL!!!

Prof. Ljubisa Topisirovic