In Memoriam: Dr. Starzl, first successful pediatric liver transplant surgery, and more
by Trisha Korioth, Staff Writer

Thomas E. Starzl, M.D., Ph.D., FAAP (Hon.), who performed the first human liver transplant and first successful pediatric liver transplant, died in his sleep March 4. He was 90.

Board-certified in general surgery and thoracic surgery, Dr. Starzl received the William E. Ladd Medal, the AAP Section on Surgery’s highest honor, in 1993.

Reflecting on the honor in a 2007 AAP Oral History, he said that among his more than 200 awards and honors, the Ladd Medal was one of his most cherished. "The children have been so important in the whole story, all the time, from the beginning to the end" (http://bit.ly/2nsOrVh).

Dr. Starzl studied at Northwestern University, earned his doctorate in neurophysiology and medical degree at Johns Hopkins. He dedicated his research to understanding immunosuppression and solving how to prevent organ rejection. He joined the University of Colorado as associate professor, then professor and chair of surgery. There, he conducted the first and first successful human liver transplants in 1963 and 1967.

Seeing potential to expand his focus in liver transplantation research, Dr. Starzl moved to University of Pittsburgh in 1981. Soon after, the first liver transplant program in the nation was launched. In 1996, the University of Pittsburgh created the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute, and he served as director.

The institute later researched the feasibility of xenotransplantation as a solution to organ shortage. His research also contributed to the understanding of renal failure and short-gut syndrome.

Dr. Starzl was founding president of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons and Transplant Recipients International Organization and an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Starzl is survived by his wife, Joy, one son and one grandchild. He is preceded in death by one daughter and one son.

Other recent deaths

Agnes B. Cabatu, M.D., FAAP, of Visalia, Calif., died Feb. 4 at age 48.

Gene Caldwell, M.D., FAAP, of Oak Ridge, Tenn., died of congestive heart failure March 4 at age 84.

Cynthia L. Ferrell, M.D., M.S.Ed., FAAP, of Portland, Ore., died Feb. 24 of complications from synovial cell sarcoma at age 50.

Richard C. Mitchell, M.D., FAAP, of Iowa City, Iowa, died Dec. 11 at age 93.

Margaret Q. Prevette, M.D., FAAP, of Twinsburg, Ohio, died suddenly on Feb. 18 at age 45.

Lynne M. Schoonover, M.D., FAAP, of Falls Church, Va., died Feb. 20 at age 66.

Jay Veltman, M.D., FAAP, of Holland, Mich., died March 16 at age 87.

Edward R. Westmark, M.D., FAAP, of Pensacola, Fla., died March 5 at age 87.