

In memory of Prof. Dr. Altan Onat

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Turkish Medicine, the Cardiology community in particular, lost one of its most distinguished scientists, a prominent scholar, Prof. Dr. Altan Onat. I have met Dr. Onat when he was in the search of an associate editor for the Turkish Journal of Cardiology Archives. He served as the editor-in-chief for 18 years (1986-2004) and during my 10 year tenure working by his side, I had a chance to see firsthand how he transformed this journal by ensuring that it was published periodically, its content was peer-reviewed, and had corporate structure. I admired his vast knowledge of statistics as well as his mathematical intelligence. Moreover, his electrocardiographic interpretations have further enhanced my admiration and contributed to my professional growth. He was one of the leading scientists on the interpretation of electrocardiography in the cardiology history exhibition of the European Society of Cardiology in 2000.

I have also witnessed his passion for the nonpareil project "Heart Disease and Risk Factors in Turkish Adults" (TARF), which he has raised like his own child and devoted all his energy during the last 26 years of his life until his death. At every opportunity, he would bring up TARF and while discussing latest findings his eyes would shine like a proud parent talking about his child's accomplishments. The studies investigating the unknown aspects of cardiac health, cardiometabolic risk factors, coronary heart disease and underlying mechanisms of diabetes in Turkish adults have gained momentum especially in the last 4 years. The detection of the autoimmune interaction triggered by the impairment of some blood proteins, primarily lipoprotein (a), strongly supported the view that different chronic diseases, including renal failure, were due to a single pathophysiological mechanism. These groundbreaking findings will shed some light on how to prevent high coronary mortality and the prevalence of other



Prof. Dr. Altan Onat
1929-2017

chronic diseases. His studies have also ranked among the scientific literature in the world. He has achieved an unprecedented success with more than 4,800 citations of his work on Web of Science. Moreover, his data was accepted to meta-analysis studies of several well-known meta-analysis group databases including Cambridge (Emerging Risk Factors Collaboration), Harvard (Global Burden of Disease), and Utrecht Universities, Non-communicable Disease RF Collab. and DECODE (Helsinki Uni) and, the Mayo Clinic; these groups also included him as a researcher and a co-author.

Prof. Dr. Altan Onat has served as the General Secretary (1978-94) and the President (1994-2002) in the Turkish Society of Cardiology for 24 years. In addition, until 1992, he was the first chairman of the European Society of Cardiology (1988-92), where a Turkish physician was elected for the first time in the Board of Directors. He was a member of the board of directors of the Turkish Medical Academy; he was the vice president of the Thrombus Association, a member of the European Association of Atherosclerosis and the founding president of the National Heart Health Platform. In addition to being the principal investigator of multi-centered studies nationally he has also been the coordinator of the international HERO-2 Study. He coordinated a workshop organized by the European Society of Atherosclerosis and served as the co-chairman of the 19th European Congress of the International Society of Non-invasive Cardiology.

He was invited to the European Union among top researchers in three major European projects. He has authored 30 books including book chapters and close to 400 scientific articles of which 150 of them are in international medical journals. He was invited to write reviews in four journals. He has served as a referee in over 70 international medical journals, including the Lan-

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Accepted Date: 06.12.2017

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DOI:10.14744/AnatolJCardiol.2017.8234



cet, JAMA and Circulation (He has been a consultant for 30-50 articles per year in international medical journals). Two different genetic syndromes, which were named after him, were accepted to the medical literature in the 1980s. Altan Onat was a Fellow of the American Heart Association and the European Society of Cardiology. As guest speaker, he gave lectures in Oslo, Warsaw, Krakow, Thessaloniki, Cairo, Brno, Amsterdam, Nürnberg and Mostar. In 1993 he won the Roche Cardiology Research Award. In 1998, he was deemed worthy of the Medical Service Award of Istanbul Medical Chamber and the Medical Service Award of Bayındır Medical Center. He was the recipient of the Sedat Simavi Health Sciences Research Award in 2001. He received the Eczacıbaşı Medical Science Award in 2004. He was honored by the gold medal of the Turkish Society of Cardiology in 2004 and the silver medal of the European Society of Cardiology in 1992.

He was also honored with a conference named after him 'Onat conference' (organized by R. W. Mahley) at the 2008 congress of the European Society of Atherosclerosis. He was invited in 2008 to assume the role of chief-editor in an open-access international medical journal, and on other as the editorial board member (The Open Atherosclerosis and Thrombosis Journal, Bentham). He also contributed to new research publications in *Excerpta Medica's* (Elsevier) Literature Service in the First View Diabetes section (2006-'08). He has published a large number of commentary articles on the International Atherosclerosis Soci-

ety (for Web sites) (2002-'09). He was the editor of Cerrahpaşa Medical Faculty Magazine for seven years. He was a member of several medical communities including the American College of Chest Physicians (1963-80), the Mayo Clinic Alumni Association (since 1959), the International Society for Internal Medicine in Turkey, and the European Atherosclerosis Society (since 1993). He spoke English, German and French fluently. My mentor has enjoyed a happy marriage with his beloved wife Ulya, who loved our country as hers, admired Atatürk, and did everything in her power to promote our country. She was Dr. Onat's rock – his most beloved supporter and aide. She truly deserved the honor bestowed by the saying "every successful man has a woman behind her." Although he has lost his greatest support, he has never lost his desire to contribute to science and be a productive member of the scientific community.

My dear mentor, I learnt a lot from you, but there was still so much more to learn. We were collectively analyzing the data of the last TARF scans just two weeks ago: You were planning on attending the National Congress of Cardiology to present this latest data and also deliver an opening speech. You were so excited during our discussions. Unfortunately, this disease which has haunted you for the past few years, quickly took you away from us. We are deeply saddened for our loss. Rest in peace. My heartfelt condolences to the cardiology community.