

In memoriam: Professor Joseph Wan-yea Lau (1947–2024)

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It is with profound sorrow that we mourn the passing of Professor Joseph Wan-yea Lau, SBS, an esteemed surgeon, distinguished medical educator, and respected alumnus of both medical faculties in Hong Kong. Professor Lau passed away on 7 February 2024 at the age of 76, leaving behind an extraordinary legacy of unwavering dedication and invaluable service to the medical community and beyond.

After graduating from the Faculty of Medicine at The University of Hong Kong in 1972, Professor Lau underwent training and practised in various hospitals in Hong Kong (including Queen Mary Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital, and Prince of Wales Hospital); he undertook overseas training at The University of London in the United Kingdom before becoming a consultant surgeon in 1988. He joined the Department of Surgery of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) as a Senior Lecturer in 1989, and he was promoted to Reader and Professor of Surgery in 1992 and 1993, respectively. Professor Lau received a Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Science from CUHK in 1995 and 2010, respectively. He served as Chairman of the Department of Surgery at CUHK from 1996 to 2001. Later, he held positions as Emeritus Professor of the Department of Surgery, Research Professor of the Faculty of Medicine, and Founding Master of Lee Woo Sing College at CUHK.

Throughout his distinguished career, Professor Lau held key roles in numerous governmental and professional organisations, making a lasting impact on the global medical landscape. He served as President of the College of Surgeons of Hong Kong from 1996 to 1999 and as Chairman of The Medical Council of Hong Kong from 2012 until his retirement in 2024. In recognition of his significant contributions to research and the medical profession, he received an array of awards and accolades from around the world. In 2003, he was elected as an Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and awarded an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Further honours include being named a Living Legend by the International Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association in 2010, being made an Honorary Fellow of the College of Surgeons of Hong Kong in 2011, receiving the Wu Jie-Ping Medical Prize in 2012, and receiving the prestigious Silver Bauhinia Star from the Hong Kong SAR Government in 2013. Most recently, in 2021, he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine.



Widely recognised as an accomplished hepato-pancreato-biliary surgeon, Professor Lau served on the editorial boards of 29 national and international journals and was a fellow or full member of 18 international and 11 local surgical associations or societies. He served as President of both the International Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association (2002–2004) and the Asian-Pacific Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association (2009–2011).

Other notable honours received by Professor Lau include being named the T.Y. Lin Foundation Lecturer in 1997 and 2002, the Dr H.S. Sachdeva Memorial Lecturer by Chandigarh Postgraduate Medical School in 1999, the Foundation Lecturer in General Surgery in 2000 and Foundation Lecturer in Liver Surgery in 2008 by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Dr Joseph H. and Mrs Helene Pollack Lecturer by the Washington University School of Medicine in 2003, the 1st Ricardo Alfonso Memorial Lecturer by the Far Eastern University – Dr Nicanor Reyes Medical Foundation Medical Center in the Philippines in 2004, and the Pearce Gould Visiting Professor by the University College London in 2004. He also received the Everts Ambrose Graham Medal from the Washington University School of Medicine, the Endoscopic Award from

China in 2004, the Gold Medal from the Chinese Chapter of the International Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association in 2006, the Overseas Gold Medal from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 2006, the Professor A.K. Sharma Oration from the Society of Surgeons of Nepal in 2008, and the Certificate of Outstanding Service from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 2008.

Professor Lau has published over 370 peer-reviewed papers in international journals, 54 papers in Chinese journals, 90 books and chapters, 3 papers as monographs, 51 reviews/editorials/letters to the editor, and over 270 abstracts. He has been invited to deliver around 200 lectures to national or international societies and medical colleges worldwide.

In addition to his professional achievements, Professor Lau profoundly influenced the lives of those who had the privilege of knowing him; these impacts extended far beyond his medical contributions. As the Founding Master of Lee Woo Sing College at

CUHK, he recognised the crucial role of education in shaping students' futures. He led innovative projects related to hostel facilities and established the framework for the College's general education, scholarship allocation, and awards schemes.

The loss of Professor Lau will leave a deep void within our medical community. His contributions will be remembered, and his absence will be keenly felt. On behalf of the College of Surgeons of Hong Kong, we extend our sincerest condolences to Professor Lau's family. May they find solace in the knowledge that his extraordinary legacy will continue to inspire and guide future generations of medical professionals. His unwavering compassion and spirit will forever shine as a beacon of inspiration, illuminating the hearts and minds of all who were impacted by his outstanding life.

Kent-man Chu

President

The College of Surgeons of Hong Kong