

Obituary

Professor Vichai Tanphaichitr,

MD, PhD, FACP, FACN, FRACP

1940–2000



Professor Vichai Tanphaichitr was one of the outstanding nutrition scientists, physicians and clinical nutritionists of the latter part of the 20th century. A medical graduate of Mahidol University in Bangkok, he pursued graduate studies at home and in the United States, obtaining his PhD from Vanderbilt University and undertook pioneering studies on carnitine and fatty acid nutrition and metabolism, and on thiamin nutrition. Once he returned to Thailand, he moved between basic and applied nutrition science, public health nutrition and clinical nutrition with great alacrity and made his mark on each of them. He was Professor and Chief of Biochemistry and Medicine, Director of the Institute of Medical Research at Mahidol University, Director of Clinical Nutrition at Ramathibodi Hospital and Editor-in-Chief of the Thai Annals of Internal Medicine. He developed extensive personal and professional linkages throughout the Asia Pacific region, which were reflected in his leadership roles – including the Presidency of the Asia Pacific Clinical Nutrition Society (APCNS) (1996–98) and co-editor of the Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition (APJCN) (1992–2000).

He was a recipient of the prestigious Bristol–Myers Nutrition Award. On 27 September 2000, he received the National Outstanding Researcher Award in Medical Science 2000 by the National Research Council of Thailand. The highest decoration he received was as the Knight Grand Cordon. There are many former students of Vichai Tanphaichitr who now occupy leadership roles in their own right – a testimony to his effective role as a teacher and mentor.

His untimely death on the 29th November 2000, from naso-pharyngeal carcinoma is a salutary reminder of how much important work remains to be done on the nutritional determinants of diseases in the Asia Pacific region. He will be remembered with great affection by his many colleagues, friends and students.