

**Commentary** **Obituary**

## Dr. Yi Zeng (1929–2020) A Pioneer on HIV and Tumor Virology in China

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Dr. Yi Zeng, a distinguished virologist, an academican of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and a Chief Scientist of National Institute for Viral Disease Control and Prevention in China CDC, passed away at the age of 92 on July 13, 2020 in Beijing. He was Director of the Institute of Virology in Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine (1983–1985), President of Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine (1991–1996), President of Chinese Association of Preventive Medicine (1999–2005), and Principal of the College of Life Sciences and Bioengineering in Beijing University of Technology (2002–2014). He was a foreign academican of Russian Academy of Medical Sciences (since 1995), the French National Academy of Medicine (since 2003), and the Russian Academy of Sciences (since 2014).

Zeng was born in March 1929 in Wujingfu Village, Jiexi County, Guangdong Province and graduated from Shanghai Medical College in 1952. He worked for 4 years in Guangdong and moved to Beijing in 1956 where he joined the Virology Laboratory, Department of Microbiology, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences [CAMS, later changed to be affiliated with Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine in 1983 (now known as China CDC)], where he started his research in virology for more than 6 decades.

In the 1950s–1960s, Zeng and his colleagues initiated a nationwide epidemiological investigation in response to a large prevalence polio cases and conducted isolation and identification of polio virus. He also participated in studies on live-attenuated polio vaccines, which contributed the successful eradication of polio in China.

Since 1960, Zeng has focused on tumor viruses including polyomaviruses and avian leukosis virus (ALV). In his collaborations with colleagues, he helped report a positive rate of ALV of over 80% in hens in China and provided support for establishing ALV-free chickens. He was the first researcher to propose Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) as a direct cause of nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC), to develop diagnostic assays to identify antibodies against EBV, and to establish the first EBV-positive NPC cell line in the world from biopsy specimens of an NPC patient. Zeng also established the Coordination Center for NPC Prevention and Treatment in Wuzhou, Guangxi in 1970, which was the first field institution for NPC in the world and saved countless patients.

As an enthusiastic social activist, Zeng promoted health education on AIDS, gave lectures on AIDS prevention knowledges, and contributed greatly in improving AIDS awareness in the general population of China during the past decades. As a distinguished educator, he educated a large amount of elite talented researchers for China.

Zeng has dedicated his life to virology research and the cause of disease prevention, for which he organized and participated in its practice and policy-making in China and had made outstanding contribution to people's health. He will continue to live on in our hearts, leading us to explore unsolved fields in modern virology.

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