

Hanns-Langendorff-Medal 2015 Awardee

Prof. Shunichi Yamashita, M.D., Ph.D.

Trustee and Vice President, Nagasaki University

and Part-time Vice President, Fukushima Medical University

Shunichi Yamashita was born in 1952 in Nagasaki City, Japan. After receiving education in catholic elementary and high schools, Shunichi Yamashita studied medicine at the medical faculty of Nagasaki University from where he graduated in 1978. From 1984 to 1987, he was the first endocrine research fellow at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles. The mentors of Dr. Shunichi Yamashita were Prof. Shlomo Melmed LA and Prof. Shigenobu Nagataki. Under their supervision, he received his Ph.D. in 1989 and became Professor of Molecular Medicine and international Radiation Health at the Atomic Bomb Disease institute, Nagasaki which belongs to the University School of Medicine. Later, he was installed as a Director of the “Doctor Takashi Nagai Memorial International Hibakusha Medical Center” which supports the victims of the atomic bombing until today. Since 2013, he has become Trustee and Vice-President of Nagasaki University.

Prof. Shunichi Yamashita has been deeply involved in the aftermath of the Chernobyl Reactor Accident, Ukraine and the atomic bomb testing in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan. I personally met Prof. Yamashita first time in 1992 in Minsk, Belarus where both of us coordinated national support programs for the victims of Chernobyl. Immediately after the Fukushima Nuclear Accident, Prof. Yamashita was asked to serve as a radiation health risk management advisor to the prefecture. He was dispatched from Nagasaki University to Fukushima for two years after the accident in order to set up the 2 Mio. people health management survey program. Since April 2013, he has returned to Nagasaki, however the partly is still active in Fukushima as the Vice President of Fukushima Medical University and is in charge of the Fukushima Health Management Survey, especially for the thyroid examination.

Prof. Yamashita is director of the WHO Collaborating Center of Nagasaki for research on “Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Response”, council member of the Science Council of Japan

and member of the Nuclear Disaster Expert Group of the Prime Minister of Japan. He is former president of the Japanese Thyroid Association.

Prof. Yamashita's scientific focus is on health consequences of nuclear accidents, not restricted only to cancer. In this context, epidemiological studies are accompanied by profound basic research of the molecular mechanisms of radiation detriments. Prof. Yamashita cooperates with many groups from different countries worldwide. His studies are published in more than 400 papers published in highly ranked international journals. I am personally quite proud that we could publish 8 papers together about radiation induced thyroid cancer. Internationally Prof. Yamashita's advice is appreciated by numerable institutions. To give only two examples: Prof. Yamashita co-authored the Management Guidelines for Children's with Thyroid Nodules and Differentiated Thyroid Cancer of the American Thyroid Association and he is a member of the "Thyroid Blocking Working Group" of WHO drafting new recommendations for the use of Potassium Iodide in the case of a reactor emergency.

Prof. Yamashita received numerable awards and honors. Among them the highest award for medical service and research from the Japanese Medical Association 2007, the Asahi Cancer Award 2011, the NCRP Sinclair Medal 2015 and the Honorary Doctorate of the Belarusian Medical Academy of Post Graduate Education in Minsk, Belarus.

Without any doubt, Prof. Yamashita is a prestigious awardee for the Hanns-Langendorff-Medal 2015. This medal is awarded since 1992 together with the German Society of Medical Radiation Protection to outstanding scientists, who delivered substantial contributions to the field of radiation biology and radiation protection. The Hanns-Langendorff-Foundation commemorates with this award the founder of "Radiation Biology" and the nestor of this new discipline in Germany. Hanns Langendorff who headed the Institute of Radiology at the University of Freiburg from 1936 to 1971.