

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

**MAKATO KURO-O**

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview  
Conducted by

Robin Mejia

at

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center  
Dallas, Texas

on

6, 7, and 8 March 2006

From the Original Collection of the University of California, Los Angeles



Makoto Kuro-o

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## MAKOTO KURO-O

1960 Born in Tochigi, Japan, on 7 January

### Education

1985 M.D., University of Tokyo  
1991 Ph.D., University of Tokyo

### Professional Experience

1985-1986 Tokyo University Hospital, Tokyo, Japan  
Intern

1986-1987 Tokyo Metropolitan Geriatric Hospital, Tokyo, Japan  
Intern

1987-1988 Resident in Internal Medicine (Cardiology)

1988-1991 University of Tokyo  
Clinical Fellow, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Department of Internal Medicine

1991-1994 National Institute of Neuroscience, NCNP, Tokyo, Japan  
Postdoctoral Fellow, Division of Molecular Genetics

1994-1998 Domestic Research Fellow, Division of Molecular Genetics

1998-2006 The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas  
Assistant Professor of Pathology  
Southwestern Medical Foundation Scholar in Biomedical  
Research

2006-present Associate Professor of Pathology

### Honors

1992 Young Investigator's Award, Japanese Circulation Society

1997 Irvine H. Page Arteriosclerosis Research Awards for Young Investigators  
(Finalist), American Heart Association

1998 Erwin von Bälz Preis, Boehringer Ingelheim

1999 President's Research Council Distinguished Young Researcher Award,  
UT Southwestern

1999-2003 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences



Selected Publications

- Yazaki Y, Tsuchimochi H, Kuro-o M, Kurabayashi M, Isobe M, Ueda S, Nagai R, Takaku F. Distribution of myosin isozymes in human atrial and ventricular myocardium: comparison in normal and overloaded heart. *Eur. Heart J.* 5: 103-110, 1984.
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## ABSTRACT

**Makoto Kuro-O** grew up in Tokyo, the younger of two children. His father was an engineer, providing air conditioning systems for large structures like the Tokyo train stations. His mother went to college but did not work after she married. At an early age Kuro-O decided he liked science. He attended the local elementary and junior high schools, but a national high school. His high school chemistry and physics teachers were enthusiastic about their subjects and helpful to Kuro-O. At this point he contemplated becoming a doctor; he talks about the higher education system in Japan, his experience getting into medical school, his parents' expectations. He entered medical school at University of Tokyo. Because his father had a heart attack during Kuro-O's second year in medical school, Kuro-O became interested in cardiology and describes his first basic laboratory experience. He did his PhD while spending at least half of his time seeing patients. He met Ryozo Nagai and joined his lab at Tokyo University. Here he discusses his funding; Nagai's research interests; publishing articles; and his postdoctoral work in genetics at the National Institute of Neuroscience of Japan on the age-suppressor gene in mice. During his last year of internship Kuro-O met and married his wife.

Kuro-O then accepted a position at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. He talks about his move to the United States; setting up his laboratory; funding in general and specifically the impact of the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences on his work; his lab management style; his teaching responsibilities; and his research on the age-suppressor gene. Next Kuro-O discusses a little more of his research on the age-suppressor gene, his current research on the anti-aging protein and renal disease, and practical applications of his research.

Kuro-O then moves on to talk about his future research on the functions of the Klotho protein and about his collaborations, tenure at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, his administrative duties, his role in the lab, the running of his laboratory, the process of writing journal articles, and patents. He also describes a typical work day. The interview concludes with Kuro-O's comments on collaborations in science, serendipity in his work, gender and ethnic issues in science, his first impressions of the United States, and a comparison of science in Japan and the United States.

## UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

### INTERVIEWER:

Robin Mejia, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program; B.A., Biology, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1997

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

**Place:** Makoto Kuro-o's office at UT Southwestern.

**Date:** March 6, 7, 8, 2006.

**Total number of recorded hours:** 4.5

**Persons present during interview:** Mejia and Kuro-o.

### CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is one in a series with Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences conducted by the UCLA Oral History Program in conjunction with the Pew Charitable Trusts' Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences Oral History and Archives Project. The project has been designed to document the backgrounds, education, and research of biomedical scientists awarded four-year Pew scholarships since 1988.

To provide an overall framework for project interviews, the director of the UCLA Oral History Program and three UCLA faculty project consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Mejia corresponded with Kuro-o by email and talked by phone to obtain background material, including Kuro-o's CV, and to schedule the interview. Mejia also obtained and read copies of Kuro-o's published his articles, reviewed his descriptions of his work on his website, and reviewed background information on the institutions at which he has worked and the countries in which he has lived.

### ORIGINAL EDITING

Carol Squires edited the interview. She edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Kuro-o reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made a number of corrections and additions.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Childhood and Education in Tokyo, Japan	1
Family background. Early schooling. Growing up in Tokyo, Japan. Father's occupation. Influential teachers. Decision to pursue science. Attends a national high school. Parental expectations. Higher education system in Japan. Attends medical school at University of Tokyo. Sister. First basic laboratory experience. Summer research experience at University of Vermont. Joins Dr. Ryozo Nagai's lab at Tokyo University. Funding. Dr. Nagai's research interests. Postdoctoral work in genetics at the National Institute of Neuroscience of Japan on the age-suppressor gene in mice. Meets and marries wife. Receives doctorate. Writing journal articles.	
Moving to the United States and Setting Up a Laboratory	24
Reasons for accepting a position at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Move to the United States. Setting up laboratory. Funding history. Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences. Grant-writing process. Lab management style. Teaching responsibilities. Research on the age-suppressor gene Current research on the anti-aging protein and renal disease. Practical applications of research.	
Future Research and Reflections on Science in the United States and Japan	45
Future research on the functions of the Klotho protein. Collaborations. Tenure at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Administrative duties. Role in the lab. Writing journal articles. Typical workday. Patents. Gender. Underrepresented minorities in science. First impressions of the United States. Science in Japan. Professional and personal goals.	
Index	66



## INDEX

### A

aging, 15, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 44, 46, 48, 55, 59  
Alzheimer amyloid precursor protein, 35  
Alzheimer's disease, 24, 35  
American Heart Association, 30

### B

Brown, Michael S., 32

### C

*C. (Caenorhabditis) elegans*, 39  
calcium, 44, 48, 49, 50  
cardiology, 10, 11, 26  
Chikuda, Hirotaka, 33  
collaboration, 34, 42, 51, 53, 54, 58, 63

### D

Dallas, Texas, 30  
diabetes  
  insulin, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 50, 57  
DNA, 31  
*Drosophila*, 39

### F

FGF. *See* fibroblast growth factor  
fibroblast growth factor, 44, 45, 46, 57  
  FGF23, 44, 45, 46, 50, 53  
Florida, 30  
Friedberg, Errol C., 29, 30, 31, 34

### G

gender, 60  
Goldstein, Joseph L., 32  
grants/funding, 19, 20, 23, 33, 34, 37, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 63

### H

Hama, Chihiro, 28

### I

ion channel, 14, 48, 49, 57

### J

Japan, 2, 5, 7, 13, 18, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 39, 51, 54, 60, 62, 63, 64  
Jones, Lisa, 33  
*Journal of Biological Chemistry*, 45

### K

*Klotho*, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 64  
Kuro-O, Kumiko (wife), 1, 17, 29, 31, 55  
Kuro-O, Masahiko (father), 1, 32  
Kuro-O, Nobuko (mother), 1, 32  
Kurosu, Hiroshi, 43, 44, 48, 53

### M

Masuda, Hiroaki, 33  
Matsuzaki, Fumio, 28  
minorities, 59, 60

### N

Nabeshima, Yoichi, 22, 29, 30  
Nagai, Ryoza, 12, 14, 26, 27, 28  
National Institute of Neuroscience, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 27, 29  
National Institutes of Health, 19, 33, 34, 37, 39, 40, 43  
*Nature*, 22, 26, 30, 40, 50  
Newton, Sir Isaac, 5  
NIH. *See* National Institutes of Health

## O

Ogawa, Yasushi, 43  
Osaka University, 29

## P

patent, 56  
Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical  
Sciences, 1, 25, 33, 41, 48  
phosphate, 44, 45, 46, 50, 51  
President's Research Council Distinguished  
Young Researcher Award, 33  
publish/publication, 10, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25,  
29, 30, 34, 36, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 48, 49,  
50, 51, 64

## R

Rakuman, Atsuko (sister), 1, 32  
Rakuman, Kaori (niece), 1  
Rakuman, Satoshi (nephew), 1

## S

Saitama University, 5  
Sakama, Mr., 5  
*Science*, 41  
senescence-accelerated mouse (SAM), 28  
Shamlau, Rosa, 33  
Shimano, Dr., 32  
Southwestern Medical Foundation Scholar  
in Biomedical Research, 33  
Suga, Tasuo, 33

## T

Takahashi, Mr., 5  
tenure, 52, 61, 63  
Tokyo Industrial University, 1  
Tokyo Station, 4  
Tokyo University, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13  
Tokyo University Hospital, 12  
Tokyo, Japan, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17,  
19, 26, 32, 51  
transgene, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21  
transient receptor potential V5, 48, 49  
TRPV5. *See* transient receptor potential V5

## U

United States of America, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 17,  
18, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 59, 60,  
61, 63, 64  
University of Texas Southwestern Medical  
Center, 1, 19, 25, 30, 31, 32, 33, 41, 43,  
48, 49, 50, 51, 56, 58  
University of Tokyo, 9, 60  
University of Vermont, 12, 26, 30

## W

World War II, 3, 17

## Y

Yamamoto, Masaya, 43  
Yanagisawa, Dr., 30, 32  
Yazaki, Yoshio, 10, 26  
Yoneyama, Mr., 5  
Young Investigator's Award, 30