IN MEMORIAM

JUDAH FOLKMAN
(February 24, 1933 – January 14, 2008)

JUDAH FOLKMAN, a giant of cancer research and father of modern angiogenesis and vasculogenesis, has died at the age of 74 by heart attack in Denver, while en route to Vancouver to give a lecture.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Folkman graduated Ohio State University in 1953 and than Harvard Medical School in 1957. After graduation, he worked at Massachusetts General Hospital as pediatric surgeon.

Folkman was Professor of Medicine at Harvard University and directed the Vascular Biology Program at Children's Hospital Boston, Massachusetts.

His research opened a new field in the biology and natural evolution of cancer, which leaded to the discovery of new anti-cancer drugs. He founded an entire branch of cancer research that is called today tumor angiogenesis and anti-angiogenic therapy. He discovered that tumors generate the formation of new blood vessels that facilitate local progression and metastases.

Folkman and his team discovered first inhibitors of blood vessels and first growth factor of endothelial cells. These findings lead to the development of anti-angiogenic therapy. Folkman published his definitive paper in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1971, and this paper is one of the most frequently cited in the medical literature of the last two decades.

Folkman was considered the leading expert of the angiogenesis field, which now offers much potential in medicine. He trained numerous leaders in medicine and biomedical engineering, and is enough to mention Ingber, Brem, Weidner, and Langer.

He held honorary degrees from 177 universities and authored more than 500 papers.

As a result of Folkman's vision and resilience, more than 10 new anti-cancer drugs are now currently on the market, and more than 1.2 million patients worldwide are now treated by anti-angiogenic therapy.

Judah Folkman has died, but its discoveries will remain in the history of medicine forever.

Marius Raica
Anca Maria Cîmpean