

Institute for Breast Cancer Research – Dr. Tak W. Mak Biography

Born in southern China in 1946 and raised in Hong Kong, Tak Wah Mak studied biochemistry and biophysics at the University of Wisconsin. In the early 1970s, he earned his PhD in biochemistry from the University of Alberta, in Edmonton. After he obtained his degree, Dr. Mak became a Canadian citizen.

Following his postdoctoral fellowship at the Ontario Cancer Institute, the research arm of Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, Dr. Mak became a faculty member and later a full professor at University of Toronto's Departments of Medical Biophysics and Immunology. He was named a University Professor at University of Toronto in 1997, an honour reserved for one per cent of the university's faculty at any given time.

Dr. Mak changed the world of science and research in 1984 when he published a landmark scientific paper on the cloning of the T cell receptor genes, a key component of the human immune system. Since that time, Dr. Mak's paper has been cited nearly 1200 times in other scientific studies around the world. Dr. Mak's role in advancing the use of genetically altered mice in scientific study has led to important breakthroughs in immunology and understanding cancer at the cellular level. The basic research in breast cancer conducted by Dr. Mak has been published in top international scientific journals and he has given several keynote addresses at breast cancer symposiums across Canada and the United States.

In spite of offers from prestigious institutions around the world, Dr. Mak remained committed to Canada's scientific community. In 1993, Dr. Mak assisted in establishing the AMGEN Research Institute in Toronto. His lab has produced numerous important studies, which have been cited more than 40,000 times by other scientists, both nationally and internationally. The number of citations is by far the highest rate in Canada to date. In 2004, with an estimated 21, 400 new cases of breast cancer expected to be diagnosed

in Canada, Dr. Mak decided to focus his research on this disease, which kills 5,300 Canadians annually. He became Director of the new Institute for Breast Cancer Research at Princess Margaret Hospital and began recruiting to establish this comprehensive Institute as a world leader in breast cancer research.

Dr. Mak holds Honorary Doctoral Degrees from numerous universities in North America and Europe. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada and has been elected a Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences (USA) as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society of London (UK.) He has won international recognition in the forms of the Emil von Behring Prize, the King Faisal Prize for Medicine, the Gairdner Foundation International Award, the Sloan Prize of the General Motors Cancer Foundation, the Paul Ehrlich Prize and the Novartis Prize in Immunology.