

Biography

David Itokazu, M.D.



David S. Itokazu is the Chairman of Okinawa Gerontology Institute (OGI), a not-for-profit, non-partisan association of health care professionals, researchers, clinicians, educators, and policymakers whose mission is to share the Okinawa positive way of healthy longevity. Dr. Itokazu was born in Okinawa. He obtained three degrees from the Philippines (PLM, UST and Fatima). He also took pre-medical courses at Marymount College, and Fairleigh Dickinson University in New York and New Jersey, respectively. Dr. Itokazu received his M.D. from Fatima College of Medicine, Philippines; and took his PGY at Okinawa Chubu Hospital / University of Hawaii Graduate of School of Medicine. In 1991, Dr. Itokazu published in *Okinawa Heart Journal*, a paper entitled: "Hypothesis: the role of beta-endorphins and nicotine in painless myocardial infarction". He hypothesized that cigarette smoking increases the nicotine in the blood plasma; and the increased nicotine stimulates the release of endogenous beta-endorphins in the brain within 8 seconds after inhalation. Both nicotine and beta-endorphin have been associated with euphoria and analgesia; and both have the capacity to reduce the perception of pain. The inability of the patient to recognize *angina pectoris* (chest pain), and evolving myocardial ischemia and infarction would deny him and his physician the golden hour (less than six hours of infarction) to salvage the myocardium from irreversible necrosis. This plight could be unfortunate for the patient because effective heart treatment such as PTCA or angioplasty is affordable and accessible at anytime practically to all Okinawan people.

Cigarette smoking could also lead to various lung diseases. Itokazu took special one-on-one lessons from Dr. Eylands, MD surgical pathologist, in the early detection of pre-cancerous stages of the lungs before it could be detected by chest X-ray and CT scan. He also took a short course (36 credit hrs) at Harvard Medical School on "Advances on Cytopathology". In 2001, as the chairman of OGI, Dr. Itokazu introduced to the world "Okinawa's best kept secret" – the science of Okinawa Longevity, through several

international scientific conferences held in Okinawa and abroad. Aside from this, he pioneered the introduction of "Okinawa Longevity and Wellness" courses in two universities in Okinawa. He is presently the Managing Editor and Publisher of Okinawa Wellness and Longevity Journal (OWLJ).

On the Philippine side, Dr. Itokazu was a recipient of UNDP, Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN); a short-termed UNDP medical consultant akin to "Balik-Scientist". TOKTEN project was spearheaded by the Department of Foreign Affairs Usec., Federico Macaranas. In 1996, during the Centennial Celebration of Philippine Independence, Dr. Itokazu on his own personal capacity, presented a photo exhibit in Japan, USA, and the Philippines about the man behind the spirit of the Philippine Revolution ~ Dr. Jose Rizal, M.D., a Philippine national hero. Rizal is considered by world historians as one of the three greatest leaders in Asia, alongside Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. Sun Yat Sen. The photo exhibit was also presented to Asian leaders at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), in Davao. It took Itokazu more than 10 years to research and prepare for the exhibit. Incidentally, Dr. Jose Rizal, an ophthalmic surgeon, pioneered the concept of public health, and specifically put it into practice in Dapitan, Philippines more than a century ago. And public health is one of the main themes of the 3rd International Conference on Longevity, 2007.