

Otakar Koldovský

SPEECH IN HONOR OF THE ISRHML ERLICH-KOLDOVSKÝ – YOUNG INVESTIGATOR
AWARD

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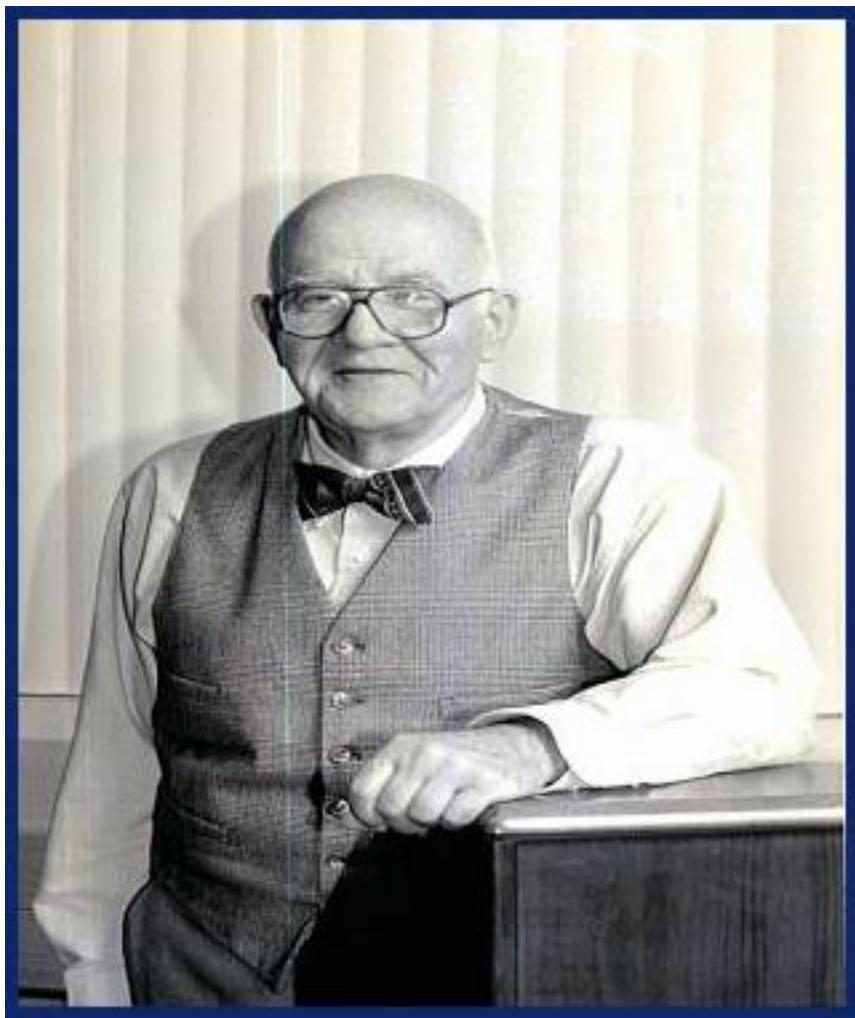
I am honored to give this brief address in honor of one of the scientists whose names grace this award, Professor Otakar Koldovský. Dr. Koldovský was a friend and colleague of mine for the last 10 years of our joint careers in the Department of Pediatrics within the University of Arizona here in Tucson. I first met him in 1977 at the annual meeting of the Perinatal Research Society in Mont Tremblant, Quebec, Canada. I remember this meeting very well since, as a very junior assistant Professor attending this meeting as a guest, I was impressed by three things about the man; Otakar's shiny pate, his booming voice and his encyclopedic knowledge of his subject. Little did I know that 10 years later, he would be interviewing me for the position as Section Chief in Neonatology and Nutritional Sciences and as a potential colleague in research at the University of Arizona. As you can see from the photograph (that his friends picked out as representative of his "professional" photographs) he and I shared a keen interest in bowties, among other things. His untimely death in April of 1998 left all whom he had worked with and known with a tremendous sense of loss. I am pleased to tell you that Professor Koldovský's wife, Eva Koldovský, is here this evening to share in the presentation of the award.

Otakar Koldovský was born March 31, 1930 in Olomouc, Moravia, and the son of an ophthalmologist and his wife. The family moved to Prague where Otakar and his brother, Pavel, were raised and educated. Otakar attended Charles University and studied at the Institute of Physiology within the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences under the direction of Professor Krecek. He then went into medical practice in Karlovy Vary, and, for a time, worked with coal miners in the mines in that region. He came back to Prague to do graduate work with Professor Kr e c e k, studying the ontogenetic development of the intestine and intestinal function. During this period he became acquainted with another graduate student interested in this area, Peter Hahn. These two graduate students maintained a life-long friendship and collegial relationship. During this period Professor Koldovský won the CIBA Prize in Physiology and accepted it on a trip to London.

Further work in the area of intestinal development led to a fateful 1965 trip to the United States, where he met and worked with Professor Norman Kretchmer at Stanford University. During the unrest that followed in his native country, Dr. Koldovský emigrated to the U.S. in 1968, initially working at Stanford and then achieving a faculty position at the University of Pennsylvania. He married in 1971 and continued his work related to intestinal enzyme systems maturation. In 1980, he moved to Tucson to take a position as Professor of Pediatrics and Physiology at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. During this period he also developed many close ties with investigators in the Departments of Pharmacology and Anatomy and Cell Biology.

Otakar Koldovský by this time had also begun to delve into the mechanism underlying changes in intestinal maturation during the suckling period. He began to realize the importance of mammalian milk for its growth promoting properties, exclusive of the known nutrients present. This led him to develop the concept of "Biologically Active Substances" ("BAS") in milk and to explore what these substances might be and how they might act using artificially reared animals fed in the presence or absence of a variety of growth factors (the 'pup in the cup' model). Ultimately, these studies and his prior work account for over 300 scientific papers, reviews and book chapters, all related to intestinal development, highly important subjects for the understanding of nutrition of the human infant. Professor Koldovský was awarded the American Academy of Pediatrics' Nutrition Award and the Harry Shwachman Award in Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition and was also invited to lecture at scientific meetings and academic institutions all over the world.

At the memorial service held in his honor shortly after his death, many came to share their thoughts about having known and studied under this remarkable man. What clearly stood out was his dedication to learning and to the students interested in learning more about nutrition. He imbued all of us with a sense of enthusiasm, and impressed upon all of us the necessity for scientific honesty and rigor in all of our studies. I believe these lessons have been well learned under his direction and that they truly form his legacy to the scientific community as a whole.



Otakar Koldovský, M.D., Ph.D. (1930-1998)