

Professor Marie Tolarova Honored with Humanitarian Award

September 26, 2019



Dr. Tolarova, Dr. Tolar and Dr. Mihee Hong, a former Dugoni School orthodontic resident who introduced Dr. Tolarova at the presentation.



The award was presented during the ICPF 13th World Congress held recently in Nagoya, Japan.

The International Cleft Lip and Palate Foundation (ICPF) recently honored Marie Tolarova M.D., Ph.D., D.Sc., professor of orthodontics at University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry with its Humanitarian Award. Dr. Tolarova's lifetime contributions to research, prevention, and service in the field of cleft lip/palate and craniofacial anomalies earned her the highest recognition from the ICPF.

The honor was presented during the ICPF's 13th World Congress this past August in Nagoya, Japan.

Over the course of her career, Dr. Tolarova has led one of the world's largest studies into the genetic causes of cleft lip and palate. She and her colleagues are also looking at nongenetic factors, such as nutritional deficiency. Together, their research is pointing the way to effective strategies to prevent the disorder.

Born in 1942 in Tabor, Czechoslovakia, Dr. Tolarova earned her medical degree at Charles University School of Medicine, Prague in 1965 and a PhD in Human Genetics at Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences & Charles University School of Medicine in 1979, and is also board-certified in both pediatrics and medical genetics. When she began her career as a pediatrician, she was troubled by the families of children she saw with craniofacial abnormalities such as cleft lip and palate. "The mothers would ask me, over

and over, 'What did I do wrong?'" said Dr. Tolarova. "I began to wonder what we could do to prevent clefts from happening."

Dr. Tolarova first published research on cleft prevention three decades ago in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, suggesting that many familial cases of cleft lip and palate could be prevented by high doses of folic acid and multivitamins before conception and in the beginning of pregnancy.

Her work has continued for many years at University of the Pacific where she established the craniofacial genetics research and cleft prevention program at the Dugoni School of Dentistry in 2000 with her husband and scientific collaborator Dr. Miroslav Tolar, an associate professor of orthodontics and biomedical sciences. Dr. Tolarova has become known around the world for her many keynote lectures and presentations about cleft etiology, genetics, treatment planning and management.

Over the years, Dr. Tolarova has also helped care for people around the world by participating in 50 international cleft mission trips to many countries through Rotaplast International, where orthodontic residents join a multidisciplinary team providing dental and orthodontic care. The teams also collect genetic information that helps researchers understand causes of cleft lip and palate, allowing them to make recommendations for prevention.

At the ICPF Humanitarian Award ceremony, Dr. Tolarova was introduced by Dr. Mihee Hong, a former orthodontic resident at the Dugoni School of Dentistry who is now a faculty member in the Department of Orthodontics at Kyungpook National University in Daegu, South Korea.

The International Cleft Lip and Palate Foundation is a multi-disciplinary humanitarian foundation devoted to care for cleft lip and palate patients. With more than twenty countries participating, the ICPF was established in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997. With more than 40 countries participating, the ICPF facilitates the exchange of the latest knowledge and data among NGOs and professional organizations about the treatment of patients with cleft lip and palate and craniofacial anomalies.

The Humanitarian Award was established by the ICPF in 1999. It recognizes individuals who dedicated their lives to patients with cleft lip and palate and craniofacial anomalies, who are recognized worldwide for their significant contributions to scientific and professional knowledge and who participate in charitable activities, operations and related works on a voluntary basis.

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