

Yury Verlinsky (09/01/1943- 07/16/2009)

We regret to announce the death on 16th July, 2009 after a period of illness of Dr. Yury Verlinsky, Aged 66.

Dr. Yury Verlinsky, born September 1, 1943, in Siberia, graduated and obtained his PhD in Cytogenetics and Embryology from Kharkov University. He started his research career in genetics in Ukraine already in the late 1960s. He was among the first in the world, and the first in the United States to introduce chorionic villus sampling (CVS) for prenatal diagnosis in the early 80s, and also pioneered the polar body testing for preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) in 1990, which became one of the two major approaches for preimplantation diagnosis. He also developed the methods for karyotyping of second polar body and individual blastomeres for preimplantation diagnosis of translocations.

Nine years ago he introduced for the first time an approach for preimplantation diagnosis of genetic disorders (PGD) combined with HLA testing. This resulted in the well-known study where the birth of an unaffected child after PGD whose cord blood was used for saving life of an affected sibling with Fanconi anemia. This 'designer baby' led to headlines across the world, and the technique is now used widely for improving access to HLA compatible stem cell transplantation for genetic and acquired disorders.

He also initiated preimplantation diagnosis of late onset disorders. This work resulted in the birth of the first child free from cancer predisposition determined by p53 tumor suppressor gene mutation. Then he extended the use of this technique for the world's first case of Alzheimer disease, demonstrating the great usefulness of preimplantation diagnosis for the wide range of common disorders of adult life.

His latest contribution to International Science has been the establishment of the world's first bank of human embryonic stem cells with genetic disorders. This bank of stem cells is presently the unique in-vitro model for developing cellular therapy for many diseases for which there is no cure, which is being used for research work all over the world. He also introduced the novel approach for obtaining individual specific human embryonic stem cells using human embryonic stem cell cytoplasm, called stembrid technology.

Yury was founder and Director of Reproductive Genetics Institute, Chicago, Illinois, USA. He established an International network of IVF and Preimplantation Genetics Centers, performing thousands of clinical cycles annually. The accumulated experience of this network is approximately 7,000 cases of preimplantation diagnosis, which is a significant part of the overall world experience. He published close to 200 papers, including five books on prenatal and preimplantation genetics, including an Atlas of Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis, which provides a detailed manual for the establishment and realization of preimplantation diagnosis in the framework of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics Services. He was heavily involved in coordination of the international activities in preimplantation diagnosis in the capacity of a chairperson of the International Working Group on Preimplantation Genetics and then as Founding President of Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis International Society (PGDIS).

He was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2007, but remained active until June this year.