OBITUARY

Obituary: Angelina Konstantinova Guskova

To cite this article: L A Ilyin and A V Barabanova 2015 J. Radiol. Prot. 35 733

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On 7 April 2015, at the age of 91 and after a long and serious illness, Angelina Konstantinova Guskova passed away in Moscow.

Doctor of medical sciences, and Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, she was one of the greatest world specialists in radiation medicine, and her name was well known in the international scientific community.

Angelina Guskova started her scientific career in 1949 as a neurologist after graduating and then conducting postgraduate work at Sverdlovsk Medical University, becoming chief of the neurological section of the Ural branch of the Institute of Biophysics. This medical hospital was created for the medical observation of the health status and treatment of personnel of the first USSR nuclear enterprise, known now as ‘Mayak’. Being a careful physician and thoughtful scientist, Dr Guskova, together with other specialists, played a crucial role in the radiological protection of personnel working in intense radiation fields. On the basis of scientific evidence, a system of prophylactic measures was created, providing a framework of radiation protection and safety. In those years, radiation medicine was born.

The observation of people working under conditions of chronic radiation exposure, as well as the study of cases of accidental overexposure, formed the basis for elaboration by Drs A Guskova and G Baysogolov of the classification of human disease due to radiation exposure. It was described in detail in their book, ‘Radiation Sickness of Man’, published in 1971, for which they were awarded the Lenin Prize. In the 70 years of guidance by A Guskova, a series of significant studies on the clinical foundations of radiation safety standards was made, as well as a scientific-based chart for the systematic medical observation of radiation workers.

In 1974, as the head of the largest center of radiation pathology in the USSR—the clinical department of the Institute of Biophysics—Professor A Guskova managed the elaboration and practical implementation of up-to-date methods of diagnosis, prognosis in relation to severity, and treatment of radiation syndromes. This allowed the team at the Institute to cope with such difficult tasks as the treatment of a huge group of patients exposed to radiation following the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. Her report on the results of this experience prepared within a few months for UNSCEAR was highly valued and was received with significant appreciation by the international community.

The work of a group of leading Soviet and American scientists called ‘Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War’, in which Professor A Guskova was an active participant, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Working for many years as a scientific expert of UNSCEAR, Professor A Guskova encouraged complete coverage in the Committee’s reports of all aspects of the problem under consideration. From 1989 to 1993 she was a member of the ICRP Main Commission. For her many years working in the field of radiation medicine and radiation safety, she was awarded the Gold Medal in Radiation Protection from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, which she received in 2000.
She created a scientific school in the field of radiation medicine, and many physicians and scientists are proud to consider themselves her pupil. Professionalism, scientific principles and devotion to humanity guarantee her lasting recognition in the world scientific community.

The memory of Angelina Guskova will live in our hearts forever.

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