Japan's 'Kawasaki disease' doctor dies at 95

10 June 2020

The Japanese doctor who discovered the mysterious "Kawasaki's disease"—recently in the headlines for some similarities to coronavirus—has died of natural causes aged 95, his research NGO said Wednesday.

Paediatrician Tomisaku Kawasaki first noticed the disease in the 1960s as a junior doctor when he began treating children with fever, red eyes and a rash with no clear cause.

He reported 50 cases as an unknown disorder in 1967, since when the condition—which mostly affects very young children—has become internationally recognised as "Kawasaki disease."

Symptoms can include swelling of the hands and feet, swollen lymph glands in the neck and irritation and inflammation of the mouth, lips, and throat, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The disease "occurs worldwide, with the highest incidence in Japan, and it most often affects boys and younger children," the CDC said.

The mysterious illness was in the news again this year, after physicians in various countries reported Kawasaki-like conditions as possible complications rising among young people with the coronavirus.

However, scientists are yet to confirm a meaningful link between Kawasaki disease and the pandemic.

Kawasaki was in good health until recently, staying active in the medical community while also working to promote a better understanding of the disease among the public.

But he died in a hospital in Tokyo "due to his advanced age", said the Japan Kawasaki Disease Research Center, which the physician led until last year.

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