

Professor Zhong Nanshan

Doctor of Science *honoris causa*

Citation

Zhong Nanshan is Professor of Medicine at the Guangzhou Medical University, Director of the State Clinical Research Centre of Respiratory Disease, a member of the WHO's Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response, Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a recipient of the Order of the Republic and the 23rd President of the Chinese Medical Association. He has received many awards, including the National Advanced Worker Award and the National May Labor Day Medal. Professor Zhong is well known for his contribution to the country during epidemics. Whenever people's health and lives have been at risk during epidemics, Professor Zhong has stood up to steer efforts to control the spread, both during SARS in 2003 and during the COVID pandemic since 2019. There are people whom we think of immediately in a crisis. Professor Zhong is such a man. He will be remembered with deep gratitude by the whole country.

Born in Nanjing in 1936, Professor Zhong grew up in Xiamen City, Fujian Province. Following in the footsteps of his father, a professor at the Sun Yat-sen University of Medical Sciences, he also pursued a career in medicine. Professor Zhong went to the Peking University Medical School in 1955, and graduated in 1960. In 1971, he came back to Guangzhou both to practise and to do research; eventually he became an expert in respiratory diseases. From 1979 to 1981, Professor Zhong studied respiratory diseases at the medical schools of The University of Edinburgh and London University. When he returned to China, he focused on the clinical practices, teaching and research of such diseases, and became the leader and principal investigator of many key projects at the National Natural Science Foundation of China. His outstanding achievements in research have been widely recognised. A prolific writer, Professor Zhong has published more than 50 papers in international academic journals, and over 200 in national journals, as well as 16 books. He has also taken out nine patents. All this has made him a leader in the research of respiratory disease in China.

Professor Zhong has received more than 20 science and technology awards, including the second- and third-class awards in the State Science and Technology Progress Awards, Special Prize in the Guangdong Science and Technology Awards, the Science and Technology Progress Award from the Ho Leung Ho Lee Foundation, and the Special Contribution Award in the Wu Jieping-Paul Janssen Medical &

Pharmaceutical Awards. Recognising Professor Zhong's outstanding achievements in medicine, a number of universities, including The University of Edinburgh, the University of Birmingham, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University conferred honorary doctoral degrees upon him in 2007, 2011, 2013 and 2020 respectively.

Professor Zhong has hung a plaque with four Chinese characters meaning “dare to cure and dare to speak” in the most prominent place in his office. This is not a usual motto for a doctor, especially “dare to speak”. But Professor Zhong certainly practises what he preaches, as shown in his two campaigns against SARS and COVID-19. The outbreak of SARS in 2003 was both life-threatening and odd, and many medical colleagues were infected. Professor Zhong, then leader of the SARS expert medical team in Guangdong, spoke out and gave reporters the facts: “SARS is not yet under control as the pathogen has not been identified yet. We have only been able to slow down the spread, and cannot control it yet.” His warning was a wake-up call for the government and the whole community, who then realised the severity and the urgency of SARS, as well as the need for the country to fight it. Shortly after, Professor Zhong suggested a three-pronged approach: early diagnosis, early isolation and early treatment, which proved very effective. For COVID-19, Professor Zhong, after a few days of investigation in Wuhan, said on 20 January 2020: “there is evidence of human-to-human transmission, and a number of medical colleagues have already been affected.” That was his warning, and the timely measures taken by the Government alerted the whole country to the importance of social distancing or avoiding gatherings altogether, of staying home, and wearing a mask outside the house, thus avoiding the terrible havoc that COVID-19 has wreaked in other countries.

Mr Chairman, in recognition of the tremendous efforts Professor Zhong has devoted to medicine, technology and education as well as his very distinguished achievements, especially in the campaigns against SARS and COVID-19, may I present Professor Zhong Nanshan for conferment of the degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa*.

Citation written and delivered by Professor Larry Qiu Dongxiao