

PROFESSOR EMERITUS KONG-JOO LEE

Ewha Womans University, Seoul Korea



Please tell us a little about yourself.

I am Kong-Joo Lee and now I am Distinguished Professor Emeritus in College of Pharmacy and Division of Molecular Biology, Ewha Womans University, Seoul Korea. I am Biochemist studying on cancer metastasis employing proteomic tools which have been developed in our lab via collaboration with chemist and bioinformatician.

Could you tell us about your career journey and how you got to your current position?

When I was young, I was very interested in Chemistry, but I went to College of Pharmacy for getting safe job in Korea as my father recommended. But I studied Biophysical Chemistry in Stanford University as a Ph. D student, cancer biology as a post-doctoral fellow. When I came back to Korea, I worked as Senior Researcher in National Research Institute, KRISS (Korea Research Institute of Science and Standards), where I expanded my research. I moved to Ewha Womans University as a professor, and started my research combining cancer biology and proteomics using MS after post-human genome project. I with my collaborator, have been funded with large government project, NCRC (National Core Research Center) and could promote my research results. Based on this experiences, I served for University as a Dean of Graduate School and Vice President of Office of Research & Industry-University Collaboration. Afterward, I have served as Adviser to the President Moon for Science & Technology and established the policy on National AI, Protection of Infectious Diseases and Promotion of Industry on Materials and Equipments. Nowadays, I am President of Jiphyun Network to deliver the truth of Science and Technology publishing trustworth knowledge (Jiphyun documents) written by Korean scientists.

Can you describe a particular challenge or set-back that you have faced in your career, and how did you overcome it?

When I came back to Korea after study, I could not get a permanent job in National Research Institute because I am a woman, while my husband got. I was so frustrated, but I re-started post-doctoral fellow in Korea although this is not satisfied. But I did good job and finally got permanent job. I think it is important to obtain the opportunity to do my research even the position is not satisfied. I think it is better than to stop my career. I think my mother is a great supporter for her daughter and always encourage me a lot. I think family support is very important for me to keep working for my research.

Do you have an inspirational advice for people who may face similar challenges?

Everything comes true as you wish. In African old word, if you collect spider webs, you can catch a lion. Always, collective power is much stronger than individual power.

Why are the networking opportunities offered by INWES so valuable? Women scientists and engineers have two aspects: first, we ourselves should be doing well with collaboration, secondly, we have to take care next generation or colleagues having poor environment.

This case study was developed in the frame of the Enhancing Research Culture [project](#)
"Towards a Warwick STEM R&D People and Culture Hub: Empowering people's voices"

