

Introduction

Tetrahedron Young Investigator Award 2007 Wilfred van der Donk



This special Symposium-in-Print issue of *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters* commemorates the 2007 Tetrahedron Young Investigator Award in Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry awarded to Wilfred van der Donk.

Wilfred van der Donk is the William H. and Janet Lycan Professor of Chemistry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was born in Culemborg, The Netherlands, and received his B.S. and M.S. from Leiden University. He then moved to the USA in 1989 to pursue his Ph.D. under the guidance of Kevin

Brugess at Rice University. After postdoctoral work at MIT with JoAnne Stubbe, he joined the faculty at the University of Illinois in 1997. He is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the *Journal of Organic Chemistry* and for *Bioorganic Chemistry*.

The research in the van der Donk laboratory focuses on using organic chemistry and molecular biology to gain a better understanding of the molecular mechanisms of enzyme catalysis. The group is also exploring the utility of enzymes in organic chemistry. Of particular interests have been enzymatic reactions in the biosynthesis of antibiotics and radical chemistry in proteins such as cyclooxygenase and lipoxygenase. In the former area, his group achieved the first in vitro biosynthesis of lantibiotics in 2004 and has since reported on the utility of the lantibiotic synthetases. These enzymes are remarkable catalysts that typically cleave 10 or more chemical bonds and form a similar number of new bonds with control over regio-, chemo-, and stereoselectivity.

Professor van der Donk has published more than 100 papers and has been recognized with a number of awards, including a Burroughs-Wellcome New Faculty Award (1998), a Research Innovation Award from the Research Corporation (1998), a Beckman Young Investigator Award (1999), a Cottrell Scholar Award (2000), an Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship (2001), a Camille Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar Award (2002), an ACS Pfizer Award (2004), an ACS Cope Scholar Award (2006), and the Tetrahedron Young Investigator Award in Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry (2007).