

People

Jeffrey M. Friedman honoured for his work in metabolic research



The Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) Award for Distinguished Achievement in Metabolic Research has been awarded to Jeffrey M. Friedman for his seminal work on the mechanisms

underlying the regulation of body weight and fat stores. The US\$50,000 award is awarded annually in each of seven categories (cancer, cardiovascular, infectious diseases, metabolic, neuroscience, nutrition and orthopaedic research) and is provided by the BMS Unrestricted Biomedical Research Grants Program.

Friedman is currently Marilyn M. Simpson Professor and Director of the Starr Center for Human Genetics at The Rockefeller University (New York, NY, USA) and an Investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (Cambridge, MA, USA). Five genes (including the *ob* gene for obesity and the *db* gene for diabetes) that led to obesity in several strains of mice were identified in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1994, Friedman and his colleagues at The Rockefeller University were the first to successfully clone these genes. They also showed that the *ob* gene codes for a protein that regulates fat storage and that when the gene becomes mutated, mice develop a syndrome resembling obesity and type II diabetes in humans. The group then went on to identify the protein, which they named leptin, and showed the importance of its role in causing obesity and other nutritional abnormalities such as diabetes.

Recently, they have developed a new fluorescence technique that enables research into examining the role of neurons in regulating food intake. Friedman said, 'The precise delineation of the architecture of the neural system that controls feeding behaviour is necessary if we are to understand the molecular mechanisms that control weight. This new method allows us for the first time to directly visualize some of the composition of this neural system.'

PET inventor is honoured

The inventor of the positron emission tomography (PET) scanner, Michael E. Phelps, has been awarded with two prestigious awards: the Charles F. Kettering Prize and the Energy@23 award. Phelps is currently Norton Simon Professor and Chair of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Department of Molecular and Medical Pharmacology, Chief of the Division of Nuclear Medicine, Director of the Crump Institute for Molecular Imaging, Associate Director of the Department of Energy (DOE) Laboratory of Structural Biology and Molecular Medicine, and Professor of Biomathematics.

The US\$250,000 Charles F. Kettering Prize was awarded by the General Motors Cancer Research Foundation to both Phelps and his colleague David Kuhl (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA) for profoundly improving how doctors diagnose, stage and treat cancer. The award is often called the 'Nobel Prize for Cancer Research' as it has preceded the Nobel Prize for seven of its awardees. The Energy@23 award, which is given by the DOE, was awarded for the impact PET has had on the ability of physicians to better detect breast cancer, identify metastasis and choose the best course of treatment.

PET was created in 1974 by Phelps and was originally designed to help research. In the early 1990s, the technique was adopted to improve diagnosis of cancer and monitor treatment after a close friend developed breast cancer. Phelps explains that 'X-rays, MRI and CT scans display how disease damages organ structure. By contrast, PET reveals how disease damages organ function.'

Innovative work in understanding innate immunity rewarded

Alessandro Moretta, Lorenzo Moretta and Klas Kärre have won the European Yvette Mayent Institut Curie prize for their innovative work in understanding the mechanisms underlying innate immunity. This work has led to improvements in both cancer immunotherapy and the management of bone marrow transplants in leukaemia treatment. This prize is awarded to those that have significantly

contributed to the advancement of cancer diagnostics, treatment and prevention and can be in the field of physics, chemistry, biology, epidemiology or a clinical field.

Kärre first began his research in this field with the 'missing self' hypothesis whereby he suggested that two prerequisite conditions are necessary to trigger the cytotoxic activity of natural killer (NK) lymphocytes against foreign or malignant cells, these being the recognition of abnormal markers and non-recognition of molecules expressed on normal cells. This theory was then confirmed and the mechanisms controlling NK cell activity identified by the Moretta brothers.

Santo Costa and John Groom join CV Therapeutics Board of Directors

Santo Costa and John Groom have been appointed to the Board of Directors of CV Therapeutics (Palo Alto, CA, USA). Costa has recently retired from his position as Vice-Chairman and President of Quintiles Transnational Corporation, and Groom retired from the position of Chief Operating Officer of Elan Corporation a few months ago.

Costa has previously been the Senior Vice-President of Administration and General Counsel at Glaxo and was a member of the Executive Committee and sat on the Board of Directors. He has also worked as US Area Counsel for Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals. He is currently Non-Executive Chairman of ArgoMed and sits on the Board of Directors of NPS Pharmaceuticals, Pilot Therapeutics, EBM Solutions, the Food and Drug Law Institute Advisory Board, and on the Board of Advisors of A.M. Pappas & Associates.

Groom was previously CEO and Director of Athena Neurosciences until its acquisition by Elan in July 1996. Before this, he held several senior positions at Smith Kline & French (SK&F), including President of SK&F International, Vice-President Europe, and Managing Director UK. He has also served as Chairman of the International Section of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association. He is currently on the Board of Directors of Elan, Ligand Pharmaceuticals and Ribozyme Pharmaceuticals.

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