



Press release

**23rd Neuronal Plasticity Prize of the Fondation Ipsen:
Catherine Dulac, Michael Meaney and J. David Sweatt
awarded for their pioneer works in the domain of
“Epigenetic and brain function”**

Paris (France), 25 July 2012 – The 23rd annual Neuronal Plasticity Prize of the Fondation Ipsen has been awarded to three researchers for their pioneer works into the epigenetic mechanisms involved in the brain development, behavior and their pathologies. It appeared those last few years that genes have a determinant role. It has been shown during the past few years that in addition to the influence of gene sequences, epigenetics mechanisms which are involved in gene expression and environment are also playing a major effect. Spectacular progresses have recently been made in this field, especially thanks to the work of the three laureates: **Catherine Dulac (Howard Hughes Medical Institutes, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA)**, **Michael Meaney (Douglas Mental Health University Institute, McGill University, Montreal, Canada)** and **J. David Sweatt (University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, USA)** for their works in the domain of ‘Epigenetics and brain function’. The €60,000 prize was awarded on July 17, 2012 by an international jury¹ led by Professor Nikos Logothetis (*Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics, Tübingen, Germany*) at the 8th FENS Forum of Neuroscience, Barcelona, Spain.

About the laureates

Catherine Dulac is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, Higgins Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology, and Chair of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology in the Faculty of Arts & Sciences at Harvard University. Her work explores the molecular biology of pheromone detection and signaling in mammals, and the neural mechanisms underlying age-, species- and sex-specific behaviors. She graduated from the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris, she received her PhD from the University of Paris VI at the Institute of Molecular and Cellular Embryology (Nogent-sur-Marne), and was a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Nobel laureate Axel Kahn at Columbia University. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a member of the French Academy of Sciences, Institute of France. She is a recipient of the Liliane Bettencourt Prize, the Richard Lounsbery Award, and the Perl/UNC Neuroscience Prize.

Michael Meaney is a James McGill Professor of Medicine at Douglas Mental Health University Institute of McGill University and Director of the Maternal Adversity, Vulnerability and Neurodevelopment Project and of the Developmental Neuroendocrinology Laboratory.

¹ Albert Aguayo (*Montreal General Hospital, Montréal, Canada*), Joël Bockaert (*Institut de Génomique Fonctionnelle, Montpellier, France*), Alexis Brice (*Hôpital de la Salpêtrière, Paris, France*), Stanislas Dehaene (*Inserm U562, Orsay, France*), Stephen Dunnett (*Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK*), Kjell Fuxe (*Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden*), Christine Petit (*Institut Pasteur, Paris, France*), Wolf Singer (*Max-Planck Institute for Brain Research, Frankfurt, Germany*).



Meaney also joined the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences and leads the Integrative Neuroscience Program. Meaney was educated at Loyola College of Montreal and received his PhD from Concordia University (Montreal) with post-doctoral training at The Rockefeller University in New York. Meaney's primary research interest is related to the stable effects of early experience, particularly maternal care, on gene expression and development. The Meaney lab has authored over 300 papers and been awarded a Distinguished Scientist Award from the National Alliance for Research in Schizophrenia and Affective Disorders, Lougheed Prize (Alberta Heritage foundation for Medical Research), The Klerman Award (Cornell University), The Patricia Barchas Award (Research in Socio-physiology), and The Transatlantic Prize (British Endocrine Society), among others. In 2012 Meaney was awarded the Order of Canada and the Distinguished Scientist award from the American Psychological Association. The Meaney lab was designated a "Mostly Highly Cited Researcher" in Neuroscience by the Institute for Scientific Information.

J. David Sweatt obtained his B.S. in Chemistry from the University of South Alabama before attending Vanderbilt University, where he was awarded a Ph.D. for studies of intracellular signaling mechanisms. He then did a post-doctoral fellowship at the Columbia University Center for Neurobiology and Behavior, working on memory mechanisms in the laboratory of Nobel laureate Eric Kandel. From 1989 to 2006 he was a member of the Neuroscience faculty at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, rising through the ranks there to Professor and Director of the Neuroscience Ph.D. program.

Dr. Sweatt's laboratory studies biochemical mechanisms of learning and memory. In addition, his research program also investigates mechanisms of learning and memory disorders, such as mental retardation and aging-related memory dysfunction. He is currently the Evelyn F. McKnight endowed Chairman of the Department of Neurobiology at UAB Medical School, and the Director of the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. He also is a Professor in the Departments of Cell Biology, Genetics, and Psychology at UAB. Dr. Sweatt has won numerous awards and honors, including an Ellison Medical Foundation Senior Scholar Award, and election as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

About the Neuronal Plasticity Prize

Founded in 1990, the Neuronal Plasticity Prize of *La Fondation Ipsen* has been awarded to renowned specialists: Albert Aguayo (*Montréal, 1990*), Anders Björklund (*Lund, 1990*), Fred Gage (*La Jolla, 1990*), Ursula Bellugi (*La Jolla, 1991*), Wolf Singer (*Frankfurt, 1990*), Torsten Wiesel (*New York, 1991*), Philippe Ascher (*Paris, 1992*), Kjell Fuxe (*Stockholm, 1992*), Terje Lomo (*Oslo, 1992*), Per Andersen (*Oslo, 1993*), Masao Ito (*Wako Saitama, 1993*), Constantino Sotelo (*Paris, 1993*), Mariano Barbacid (*Princeton, 1994*), Yves Barde (*Planegg-Martinsried, 1994*), Hans Thoenen (*Planegg-Martinsried, 1994*), Jacques Mehler (*Paris, 1995*), Brenda Milner (*Montreal, 1995*), Mortimer Mishkin (*Bethesda, 1995*), Friedrich Bonhoeffer (*Tubingen, 1996*), Corey Goodman (*Berkeley, 1996*), Marc Tessier-Lavigne (*San Francisco, 1996*), Antonio Damasio (*Iowa City, 1997*), Richard Frackowiak (*London, 1997*), Michael Merzenich (*San Francisco, 1997*), Heinrich Betz (*Frankfurt, 1998*), Gerald Fischbach (*Boston, 1998*), Uel McMahan (*Stanford, 1998*), Masakazu Konishi (*Pasadena, 1999*), Peter Marler (*Davis, 1999*), Fernando Nottebohm (*Millbrook, 1999*), Tomas Hökfelt (*Stockholm, 2000*), Lars Olson (*Stockholm, 2000*), Lars Terenius (*Stockholm, 2000*), Albert Galaburda (*Boston, 2001*), John Morton (*Londres, 2001*), Elisabeth Spelke (*Cambridge, USA, 2001*), Arturo Alvarez-Buylla (*San Francisco, 2002*), Ronald Mc Kay (*Bethesda, 2002*), Sam Weiss (*Calgary, 2002*), François Clarac (*Marseille, 2003*), Sven Grillner (*Stockholm, 2003*), Serge Rossignol (*Montréal, 2003*), James Gusella (*Boston, 2004*), Jean-Louis Mandel (*Strasbourg, 2004*), Huda Y. Zoghbi (*Houston, 2004*), Ann Graybiel (*Cambridge, USA, 2005*), Trevor Robbins (*Cambridge, UK, 2005*), Wolfram Schultz



(Cambridge, UK, 2005, Eckhart D. Gundelfinger (Magdeburg, 2006), Mary B. Kennedy (Pasadena, 2006), Morgan Sheng (Cambridge, USA, 2006), Nikos K. Logothetis (Tübingen, 2007), Keiji Tanaka (Wako, 2007), Giacomo Rizzolati (Parma, 2007), Jean-Pierre Changeux (Paris, 2008), Peter W. Kalivas (Charleston 2008), Eric J. Nestler (Dallas, 2008), Alim-Louis Benabid (Grenoble, 2009), Apostolos P. Georgopoulos (Minneapolis, 2009), Miguel A. L. Nicolelis (Durham, 2009), Thomas Insel (Bethesda, 2010), Bruce Mc Ewen (New York, 2010) and Donald Pfaff (New York, 2010), Helen Neville (Eugene, 2011), Isabelle Peretz (Montreal, 2011) and Robert Zatorre (Montreal, 2011).

La Fondation Ipsen

Established in 1983 under the aegis of the Fondation de France, the mission of the Fondation Ipsen is to contribute to the development and dissemination of scientific knowledge. The long-standing action of the Fondation Ipsen aims at fostering the interaction between researchers and clinical practitioners, which is indispensable due to the extreme specialisation of these professions. The ambition of the Fondation Ipsen is to initiate a reflection about the major scientific issues of the forthcoming years. It has developed an important international network of scientific experts who meet regularly at meetings known as Colloques Médecine et Recherche, dedicated to six main themes: Alzheimer's disease, neurosciences, longevity, endocrinology, the vascular system and cancer science. Moreover the Fondation Ipsen has started since 2007 several meetings in partnership with the Salk Institute, the Karolinska Institutet, the Massachusetts General Hospital, the Days of Molecular Medicine Global Foundation as well as with the science journals Nature, Cell and Science. The Fondation Ipsen produced several hundreds publications; more than 250 scientists and biomedical researchers have been awarded prizes and research grants.

For further information, please contact:

Isabelle de Segonzac, Image Sept

E-mail : isegonzac@image7.fr

Tel. : +33 (0)1 53 70 74 70