People

The 2002 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

The 2002 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine has been jointly awarded to Sydney Brenner, H. Robert Horvitz and John E. Sulston for their discoveries concerning 'genetic regulation of organ development and programmed cell death'.

Sydney Brenner (The Molecular Sciences Institute, Berkeley, CA, USA) established *Caenorhabditis elegans* as a novel experimental model organism, which provided a unique opportunity to link genetic analysis to cell division, differentiation and organ development.

John Sulston (The Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom) extended Brenner's work and mapped a cell lineage where every cell division and differentiation could be followed in the development of a tissue in *C. elegans* and showed that specific cells undergo programmed cell death as an integral part of the normal differentiation process.

H. Robert Horvitz (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA) continued the studies of Brenner and Sulston and has discovered and characterized key genes that control cell death in *C. elegans* and shown how these interact with each other in the cell death process, and that corresponding genes exist in humans.

The prize was announced at the Nobel Assembly at Karolinska Institutet on 7 October 2002.

Affitech appoints three new senior management appointments

Affitech AS (http://www.affitech.com), a leading human antibody therapeutic company, has announced the appointemtn of three new senior management appointments. Martin Welschof is the new Chief Operating Officer, Per Atle Steinsland is Chief Financial Officer and Bjorn Cochlovius is Director of Preclinical Development.

According to Affitech's CEO, Ole J. Marvik, the appointments mark a significant milestone in the company's growth and development. 'Over the last year we have seen in creasing acceptance of our suite of human antibody discovery technologies and development tools… I am particularly pleased to welcome back Martin Welschof, who was one of the original founders of Affitech and is a widely recognised expert in antibody engineering.' He added that, in addition, Martin brings five years of management experience from the biotech industry in the field of functional genomics.

Per Atle Steinsland has a broad industry background and, said Marvik, he will be instrumental in the further development of the commercial success of the company's commercial strategy, as well as the attainment of the company's ambitious long-term financial goals.

'Finally,' added Mravik, 'in order to co-ordinate and boost our product pipeline activities, Bjorn Cochlovius takes the key position of preclinical development. Bjorn has 10 years of experience with animal models for cancer and particularly in the testing of antibody drug leads.'

Quark Biotech appoint new members to drug development team

The appointment of James Shook to Executive Vice resident of Product development and Ihor Bekersky to Vice President of Clinical Development have been announced by Quark Biotech (http://www.quarkbiotech.com).

Shook will be responsible for leading Quark's strategic product development efforts to bring compounds from the product lead stage through regulatory approval. He has almost 30 years experience in the pharmaceutical industry, including senior management roles at Genentech and Abbott Laboratories, which has provided him with expertise in preclinical and clinical development as well as regulatory affairs, quality control and manufacturing.

Bekersky will oversee the preclinical evaluation and testing of drug candidates emerging form the company's drug discovery programs, and brings to Quark over 25 years of pharma and biotech experience, including more than a decade each at Hoffmann-La Roche and Fujisawa Healthcare. His areas of expertise include ADME/Tox and clinical pharmacology studies required for IND and NDA submissions.

Daniel Zurr, President and CEO of Quark Biotech, said: 'Jim's strong relationship with the FDA and reputation for successfully managing regulatory submissions, and Ihor's extensive experience in preclinical development and clincal pharmacology will be instrumental in our efforts to move our preclinical compounds into IND and clinical trials.'

Quark Biotech is currently focussing on developing therapeutics to treat cancer, metabolic disorders and cardiovascular and ischaemic diseases.

2002 Lasker Award for Basic Research

James E. Rothman, a cell biologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC; http://www.mskcc.org), has been awarded the 2002 Lasker Award for Basic Research. Rothman's career has focused on elucidating the underlying mechanisms of transport within cells and is being recognized for his discoveries revealing the universal machinery of how vesicles know how to reach their correct destination and when and where to release their contents.

Rothman is Head of the Laboratory of Cellular Biochemistry at MSKCC. He began his research in 1978 at Stanford University. He was at Princeton University form 1988–1991 before joining MSKCC. In 1993, Rothman and colleagues announced the discovery of SNARE proteins, which are implicated in membrane fusion. He proposed the 'SNARE hypothesis', which stated that these proteins located in both the intracellular compartment and vesicle membranes control how the membranes fuse, and thus how the vesicles release their contents: final proofs of this hypothesis was published in September 2000.

Harold Varmus, MSKCC President, said: 'Jim Rothman's research has answered some of the most fundamental questions about cell biology. His contributions have allowed us to visualize processes inside the cell and get a very clear picture of how cells compartmentalize their functions and move those compartments in highly specific ways.'

Rothman shares the award with Randy W. Schekman of the University of California, Berkeley (http://www. berkeley.edu) who has used a genetic approach to study the molecular machinery of cells, by creating yeast with mutant genes that prevented them from performing normal cellular transport functions.

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