

Salk Scientist Fred H. Gage To Receive The Keio Medical Science Prize

16 Oct 2008

Salk researcher Dr. Fred H. Gage, professor in the Laboratory of Genetics, has been awarded the Keio Medical Science Prize for his discovery of the physiological role of adult neurogenesis in mammalian brains. He will officially receive the award during a ceremony at Keio University's School of Medicine in Japan on Nov. 21.

Dr. Gage's laboratory concentrates on the adult central nervous system and unexpected plasticity and adaptability to environmental stimulation that remains throughout the life of all mammals. He and his colleagues showed that, contrary to accepted dogma, human beings are capable of growing new nerve cells throughout life.

Small populations of immature nerve cells are found in the adult mammalian brain, a process called neurogenesis. Gage is working to understand how these cells can be induced to become mature functioning nerve cells in the adult brain and spinal cord.

Dr. Gage's lab also showed that environmental enrichment and physical exercise can enhance the growth of new brain cells and his team is studying the underlying cellular and molecular mechanisms that may be harnessed to repair the aged and damaged brain and spinal cord.

Kyoto University professor Dr. Shimon Sakaguchi was also named a recipient of this year's award for his discovery of regulatory T cells and their role in immunological diseases. Both will receive a certificate of merit, a medal and 20 million yen (about \$195,000) in prize money.

Past winners of the Keio Medical Science Prize include Salk Professors Drs. Tony Hunter (2001); and Ron Evans (2003); Salk Non-Resident Fellow Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn (1999); and UCSD's Dr. Roger Tsien (2004), who received the Nobel Prize for physiology or medicine in 2008.

Notes:

The Keio Medical Science Prize, one of the Keio University Medical Science Fund's major projects, was launched to contribute to the advancement of life sciences.

The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California, is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to fundamental discoveries in the life sciences, the improvement of human health and the training of future generations of researchers. Jonas Salk, M.D., whose polio vaccine all but eradicated the crippling disease poliomyelitis in 1955, founded the Institute in 1960 with a gift of land from the City of San Diego and the financial support of the March of Dimes.

Source:

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