

Professor Michel Haïssaguerre

Winner of the 2010 Louis-Jeantet Prize for medicine



It has just been announced in Geneva that Michel Haïssaguerre, Professor of Cardiology, Université Victor-Segalen and Hôpital Haut-Lévêque, Bordeaux has been awarded the 2010 Louis-Jeantet Prize for his work on cardiac fibrillation.

His research has been based on meticulous observation with careful and stringent analysis and has applied scientific method to the vagaries inherent to clinical research. Although we still do not know why the pulmonary veins trigger atrial fibrillation in those that are so affected isolation with subsequent symptom resolution powerfully, albeit empirically, underpins their critical role in the triggering and maintenance of this potentially devastating disease. More recently his interests have turned to the application of similar methods to the identification and resolution of the triggers of ventricular fibrillation.

His work has resulted in the transformation of the lives of many patients and those with a professional interest in cardiac arrhythmias have been provided with new, effective and potentially transforming treatment options. Atrial fibrillation previously thought to be intractable can for many now be effectively cured.

The contributions made by Haïssaguerre are of course already widely recognized and he has been awarded many prizes including the Grüntzig Award, European Society of Cardiology (2003), the Pioneer Award of the North American Society of Pacing and Electrophysiology (2004) and the Michel Mirowski Award (2009). What makes the receipt of the Louis-Jeantet Prize so significant however is that the pre-clinical basic scientific community now joins in recognizing his contribution.

The Louis-Jeantet Foundation was established in 1983 and its stated principal interests are in physiology, biophysics, structural biology, biochemistry, molecular and cell biology, developmental biology and genetics. Seventy previous recipients include Kim Nasmyth, Adrian Bird, Jurg Tscopp, Nicole Le Douarin and Sydney Brenner some of whom have gone on to win the Nobel Prize. The other recipient for 2010 will be Professor Austin Smith, FRS, MRC Professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Director of the Wellcome Trust Centre for Stem Cell Research, University of Cambridge. His work on pluripotency has advanced our understanding of the mechanisms governing renewal and differentiation of stem cells.

Professor Haïssaguerre will receive his award in Geneva on Thursday April 22nd 2010 and we should all congratulate him. He has already transformed the management of cardiac fibrillation and we look forward to many further innovations from him and his colleagues in the years ahead.

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