multiple sclerosis
international federation

Press release

Multiple Sclerosis Research

2009 Charcot Award winner - Professor John Prineas, MBBS, FRCP

The 2009 winner of the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation's (MSIF) prestigious biennial Charcot Award for a lifetime achievement in research into the understanding or treatment of multiple sclerosis (MS), is Professor John Prineas.

Multiple sclerosis is one of the most prevalent diseases of the central nervous system and directly affects an estimated 2 million people around the world. The cause of MS is not known.

Professor Prineas was selected from an outstanding field of candidates by an international panel of experts from MSIF's International Medical and Scientific Board, chaired by Professor Alan Thompson.

"*These are especially interesting times for the many investigators currently studying tissue changes in the brain and spinal cord in multiple sclerosis. Because of the multitude of new and unexpected findings that have been reported in recent years, we are now in the process of re-writing the basis of our understanding of the nature of tissue injury and repair in the disease. The MSIF Charcot Award for 2009 honours not only my contribution to a particular body of work , and for this I am most grateful, but also the efforts of colleagues with whom I have worked for many years, our patients, and the universities, MS societies and other institutions that have supported this work."*
Professor John W Prineas

"The Charcot award recognizes a life-time contribution to the world of MS and there could be no more deserving recipient. John Prineas has made a unique contribution to our understanding of the pathology of multiple sclerosis - over a number of decades, collaborating with colleagues on a truly global scale."
Prof. Alan Thompson

Prof Prineas' research career has spanned more than 40 years and his work on myelin destruction has been a central theme. He began his medical training at the University of Sydney, Australia and moved to London in the mid 1960s to continue his advanced medical training and specialization in neurology. In 1967 he travelled to USA where he was mentored by Labe Scheinberg, a pioneer in the clinical care of MS, and in that year

also received a postdoctoral fellowship from the National MS Society. In 1974, he was appointed Professor at the Department of Neurosciences, University of Medicine and Dentistry, New Jersey Medical School, USA.

Following a 25 year career in research, teaching and treating people with MS, Prof Prineas returned to his native Australia where he is now Professor of Neurology at the Institute of Clinical neurosciences, University of Sydney. Since then he has remained active in research of the pathology of the early lesion in MS.

"Professor Prineas published a landmark paper in 1979 providing EM evidence that repair to myelin can occur in MS plaques and in 1993 he further demonstrated that remyelination can occur normally within the central nervous system. Subsequently, Professor Prineas demonstrated the ability of oligodendrocytes to regenerate in MS. This work has opened up new therapeutic avenues for exploration. He is also a senior advisor on the 'MS lesion project'.

More recently, Professor Prineas with Dr Barnett has published a study (Annals of Neurology 2004) describing oligodendrocyte apoptosis occurring in MS lesions prior to any evidence of inflammation. This has not only expanded the knowledge of the underlying pathology of MS but challenged more traditionally held concepts of the development of the MS lesion.

He is both a treasured resource and an inspiration to all involved in the investigation of MS."
Dr. Bill Carroll

"The re-flowering of tissue based accounts of multiple sclerosis was largely enabled by the efforts of a very few experimental neuropathologists amongst whom John Prineas was a key figure.

Specifically, Prineas' application of experimental observations on the morphological features of thin myelin sheaths with short internodes established the reality of remyelination and contributed to the launch of the modern era of neurobiology in which precursor and stem cell biology now play such a prominent role."
Prof. Alistair Compston

Notes to Editors:

1. The Charcot Award
Jean Martin Charcot, born in Paris, France in 1825, is considered by many to be the founder of modern neurology.

In 1868, as Professor of Neurology at the University of Paris, he made the first diagnosis of multiple sclerosis and his clinical-pathological definition is still used today. For much of his career Charcot worked and taught at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris where in 1882 he established a neurology clinic, the first of its kind in Europe.

Since 1969, the Charcot Award has recognised the significance of Jean Martin Charcot's studies into neurological diseases and his pioneering work which led him to be among the first to match specific anatomical lesions to a variety of neurological disorders, including MS. As the winner of the award, Professor Prineas is invited to give the Charcot Lecture at the 2009 European Committee of Treatment and Research in MS (ECTRIMS) meetings. The meetings will take place in Düsseldorf, Germany, from the 9 – 12 September. The award will cover Professor Prineas' travel costs, accommodation and expenses to attend the above meetings. In addition, he will be awarded UK£1,500.

Previous winners of the Charcot Award:

Year	Winner	Country
2007	Prof Alastair Compston	UK
2005	Prof Hans Lassmann	Austria
2003	Dr Henry McFarland	USA
2001	Prof Hartmut Wekerle	Germany
1999	Prof John Kurtzke	USA
1995	Prof Donald Paty	Canada
1993	Dr Byron Waksman	USA
1991	Prof Ian McDonald	UK
1988	Dr Yoshigoro Kuroiwa	Japan
1985	Dr Richard T Johnson	USA
1983	Dr Leonard T Kurland	USA
1981	Dr Helmut Bauer	Germany
1969	Dr Douglas McAlpine	UK

2. What is MS?
MS is an inflammatory demyelinating condition. Myelin, one of the fatty substances that sheathe, insulate and protect nerve fibres, aids the transmission of nerve signals throughout the body. It is the speed and efficiency with which these impulses are conducted that permits smooth, rapid and co-ordinated movements to be performed with little conscious effort.

MS is a very variable condition and the symptoms depend on which areas of the central nervous system have been affected. There is no set pattern to MS and everyone with MS has a different set of symptoms that vary and can change in severity and duration. In many cases MS causes gradual disability. Common symptoms include blurred vision, loss of balance, spasticity, tingling, numbness and burning sensations, slurred speech, incontinence, fatigue and cognitive disturbances.

3. About MSIF
The Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF) was established in 1967 as an international body linking the activities of national MS societies around the world. MSIF currently has 42 member societies and works to support the development of many other emerging societies worldwide.

Our vision - A world without MS

Our mission - To lead the global MS movement by stimulating research into the understanding and treatment of MS and by improving quality of life of people affected by MS. In undertaking this mission, we utilise our unique collaboration with national MS societies, health professionals, people affected by MS and the international scientific community.

We work to achieve this through the following four programme objectives:
• to stimulate international MS research
• to support the development of effective national MS societies
• to communicate knowledge, experience and information about MS
• to advocate globally for the international MS community

MSIF contact:

Dr. Dhia Chandraratna
International Medical and Scientific Research Officer
MSIF, Skyline House, 200 Union Street, London, SE1 0LX, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7620 1911
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7620 1922

dhia@msif.org
www.msif.org