



Press release

## **21<sup>th</sup> Neuronal Plasticity Prize awarded to three eminent scientists for their research into the domain of the Neuroendocrine Control of Behavior: Thomas R. Insel, Bruce McEwen and Donald Pfaff**

**Paris (France), 5 July 2010** – The 21<sup>st</sup> annual Neuronal Plasticity Prize has been awarded to Thomas R. Insel (*National Institute of Health, Bethesda, USA*), Bruce McEwen (*The Rockefeller University, New York, USA*) and Donald Pfaff (*The Rockefeller University, New York, USA*) for their research in the domain of the Neuroendocrine Control of Behavior. The €60,000 prize was awarded on July 4, 2010 by an international jury<sup>1</sup> led by Professor Wolf Singer (*Max-Planck Institute for Brain Research, Frankfurt, Germany*) at the 7<sup>th</sup> Forum of European Neuroscience (FENS), Amsterdam.

### **About the winners**

**Thomas R. Insel, M.D.**, is Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). His tenure at NIMH has been distinguished by groundbreaking findings in the areas of practical clinical trials, autism research, and the role of genetics in mental illnesses. Prior to his appointment as NIMH Director in the Fall 2002, Dr. Insel was Professor of Psychiatry at Emory University. From 1994 to 1999, he was Director of the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center in Atlanta. While at Emory, Dr. Insel continued the line of research he had initiated at NIMH studying the neurobiology of complex social behaviors. He has published over 250 scientific articles and books and has served on numerous academic, scientific, and professional committees and boards. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine and is a recipient of several awards including the Outstanding Service Award from the U.S. Public Health Service.

**Bruce McEwen, Ph.D.**, is Head of the Harold and Margaret Milliken Hatch Laboratory of Neuroendocrinology at The Rockefeller University. He is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine. He served as President of the Society for Neuroscience in 1997-1998. As a neuroscientist and neuroendocrinologist, Pr. McEwen studies environmentally-regulated, variable gene expression in brain mediated by circulating steroid hormones and endogenous neurotransmitters in relation to brain sexual differentiation and the actions of sex, stress and thyroid hormones on the adult brain. His laboratory discovered adrenal steroid receptors in the hippocampus in 1968. His laboratory combines molecular, anatomical, pharmacological, physiological and behavioural methodologies and relates their findings to human clinical information. His current research focuses on stress effects on amygdala and prefrontal cortex as well as hippocampus, and his laboratory also investigates sex hormone effects and sex differences in these brain regions.

**Donald Pfaff Ph.D.**, is the head of the Laboratory of Neurobiology and Behavior at The Rockefeller University. He uses neuroanatomical, neurochemical and neurophysiological methods to study the cellular mechanisms by which the brain controls behavior. After

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Aguayo (*Montreal General Hospital, Montréal*), Joël Bockaert (*Institut de Génomique Fonctionnelle, Montpellier*), Alexis Brice (*Hôpital de la Salpêtrière, Paris*), Stanislas Dehaene (*Inserm U562, Orsay*), Stephen Dunnett (*Cardiff University, Cardiff*), Kjell Fuxe (*Karolinska Institute, Stockholm*), Marc Jeannerod (*Institut des Sciences Cognitives, Lyon*), Christine Petit (*Institut Pasteur, Paris*).



discovering steroid hormone receptors in hypothalamic neurons, Dr. Pfaff used them, on the one hand, to help unravel the neural circuit for lordosis behavior, the first complete set of mechanisms for a mammalian behavior; and, on the other hand to elucidate estrogen-facilitated gene expression in neurons related to lordosis behavior. Now, his lab considers sexual arousal as one manifestation of generalized CNS arousal, a powerful function of clinical importance. Dr. Pfaff is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

### **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 Rizzolatti (*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*) and Miguel A. L. Nicolelis (*Durham, 2009*).

### **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, in 2007, the *Fondation Ipsen* started three new series of meetings. The first series is an annual meeting organized in partnership with the Salk Institute and *Nature* and focuses on Biological Complexity; the second series is the "Emergence and Convergence" series with *Nature*, and the third with *Cell* and the Massachusetts General Hospital entitled "Exciting Biologies". Since its beginning, the *Fondation Ipsen* as organised more than 100 international conferences, published 70 volumes with renowned publishers and 211 issues of a widely distributed bimonthly newsletter *Alzheimer Actualités*. It has also awarded more than 100 prizes and grants.

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