

Kowsar Award 2011

Professor Howard Thomas:



The Winner of the Third Kowsar Award in 2011

Professor Howard Thomas was born on 31st July 1945 in Wales, United Kingdom. He obtained a BSc degree with honours in physiology at Newcastle University in 1966 and continued with his MBBS studies, graduating in 1969. He also obtained a PhD in medicine from Glasgow University in 1974. He started his career in hepatology as Wellcome Senior Fellow in Clinical Sciences in 1978 and soon became Titular Professor of Medicine at the Royal Free Hospital Medical School of London University, in 1984. He was appointed professor and chairman of medicine at St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in 1987, and subsequently professor of general medicine and head of the department of hepatology and gastroenterology, Imperial College, from 1997 to his retirement in March, 2011. From 2001 to 2004 he was dean of the faculty of medicine, and since 2007 has continued his activity as theme leader for hepatology and gastroenterology at Imperial BRC.

He has been a member or officer of numerous learned societies, most notably serving as president of the British Association for the Study of the Liver (1996-1998) and of the European Association for the Study of the Liver in 1997, as well as chairman of various Department of Health committees on Viral Hepatitis. He also collaborated as a member of BSG and RCP councils from 2001-2005 and was a senior member of the Association of Physicians of Great Britain and Ireland as well as serving as a member of the National Expert Panel on New and Emerging Infections. He has acted as WHO adviser and rapporteur on chronic liver disease, WHO adviser on antiviral drugs and hepatitis C, and member of the Expert Advisory Group on Cancer, EC EuroHep, the Scientific Committee of EASL, the International Advisory Board for the German Medical Network for Hepatitis and of the Hepatitis B and C International Policy Group. He also became Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in London, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow, the Royal College of Pathologists in London and the Academy of Medical Science.

Since 1999 he has chaired many national committees such as Chairman of DoH Advisory Group on Viral Hepatitis, DoH Steering Group on Hepatitis C National Strategy, Pan-London Group for Co Services, and Cross Cutting Viral Hepatitis Group of National Liver Strategy. He is currently the chairman of the NICE Clinical Guidelines Development Group for Hepatitis B Management.

He was a trustee of the British Liver Trust from 1993-2000 where currently he is continuing his activity as the vice-president. Following his successful activities in chairmanship, he now serves as both a Hepatitis B Foundation trustee, and a trustee of the Caxton Trust.

Academic distinctions bestowed on him include the Research Medal of the British Society of Gastroenterology for his work on oral immune tolerance in 1984, the Sherlock Research Prize (1988), the Hans Popper International Award for Distinction in Hepatology based on his novel research and publications on chronic hepatitis B (1982), State of the Art lecturer at several international meetings (1991 & 1997) and Life Time Recognition Awards by EASL and the British Society for Study of the Liver in Edinburgh and Vienna (2010), and a Medal in Celebration of a 100 Years of Virology from the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences in 1997.

His contributions clinically and scientifically to the field of hepatology have been immense over the years. Pioneering contributions include the description of the various phases that characterise chronic hepatitis B virus



(HBV) infection, evidence of a deficiency in interferon production in patients who acquired their HBV infection in adult life, initiating the first European trials in antiviral treatment and the description of the precore and first vaccine escape mutants of HBV for which he won the Hans Popper International Award in Basel, 1989. He continued with the description of the viral dynamics of HBV infection, contributed to the cloning of hepatitis G virus/GBV-C, and then followed with the description of the presence of hepatitis C virus (HCV) in the brain and its association with neurocognitive abnormalities. The identification of host factors associated with acute, chronic stages and response to antiviral treatment has been the subject of several seminar papers for both HBV and HCV, as well as for other conditions including alcoholism, drug-induced liver disease and NAFLD. He has more than 450 publications, most of them focusing on the role of the liver in immune regulation (PhD thesis on oral immune tolerance) and on the pathogenesis and treatment of virus-induced liver disease and cancer.

He has also much commercial expertise. For instance, he has served as scientific advisor to several US biotech firms, and on the international advisory boards of several major pharmaceutical companies, and on the data and safety monitoring boards of several companies, most recently Vertex. Currently he is the non-executive chairman of Riotech Pharmaceuticals Ltd., an Imperial Spinout company founded in 2004, producing novel compounds for treatment of RNA viruses including HCV, dengue and RSV.

Finally, he is editor of the Viral Hepatitis textbook and founding Editor of the Journal of Viral Hepatitis.



Kowsar Award is an international award in hepatology that was initiated by Prof Seyed Moayed Alavian, Professor of Gastroenterology and Liver Diseases and editor in chief of Hepatitis Monthly, the first journal in the field of hepatitis in the Middle East and Central Asia, funded by Baqiyatallah Research Center for Gastroenterology and Liver Diseases and, on behalf of Iran Hepatitis Network, presented annually to the best worldwide scientist and researcher in the field of hepatology at the International Tehran Hepatitis Congress.

By presenting this award we aim to:

- 1) Promote competition and encourage scientists, particularly the young researchers, to achieve greater success
- 2) Encourage and support successful institutions, in this competition
- 3) Raise awareness among decision-makers and intellectuals about potential talents in the world

The first Kowsar award was conferred on Prof. Mario Rizzetto, Professor of Gastroenterology and Liver Diseases at University of Torino, Italy, discoverer of the delta antigen and antibody in the hepatitis B surface antigen carriers. Prof. Michael Roggendorf, Professor of Hepatology at the University of Essen, Germany, chairman of the Robert Koch Institute and developer of the hepatitis C virus DNA vaccine who is of the most eminent researchers in the field of hepatology won the second Kowsar award. Now Prof Howard Thomas will be the third winner at the 4th International Tehran Hepatitis Congress.

