

Ferrara Receives Gairdner Prize, Canada's Highest Honor in Life Sciences

Honored for research leading to new therapies for cancer and wet macular degeneration

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Napoleone Ferrara, MD, distinguished professor of pathology at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and senior deputy director for basic sciences at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center, was named today among eight recipients of the Canada Gairdner Awards at a ceremony in Toronto.



Napoleone Ferrara, MD

The Gairdner awards are among the most esteemed honors in medical research, celebrating outstanding discoveries or contributions to medical and life sciences. This year's awards showcase achievements in cardiovascular disease, cancer, immunotherapy and human parasitic diseases.

Ferrara was recognized for his work identifying the role of the human VEGF gene in promoting angiogenesis – the formation of new blood vessels that can feed tumor growth – and subsequent development of two major monoclonal antibody drugs: Bevacizumab (marketed as Avastin), which is used to treat multiple forms of cancer, including breast, brain and colorectal, and ranibizumab (marketed as Lucentis), which treats wet age-related macular degeneration, a leading cause of blindness in the elderly.

Other 2014 recipients are James P. Allison, PhD, of the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center for developing immune system-based cancer therapies; Titia de Lange, PhD, of Rockefeller University for her discovery of the mechanisms protecting mammalian telomeres from damage; Sir Marc Feldman, FRS, and Sir Ravinder Nath Maini, FRS, of the University of Oxford for their discovery of a new rheumatoid arthritis treatment; Harold Fisher Dvorak, MD, of Harvard Medical School for his work describing how cancer tumors make VEGF; Satoshi Omura, PhD, of Kitasato University for identifying the causative microorganisms of river blindness and helping develop a successful treatment; and Salim Yusuf, MBBS, of David Braley Research Institute for his extensive epidemiological cardiovascular studies in more than 60 countries.

The Gairdner awards have been presented by the Gairdner Foundation since 1959, and are sometimes a precursor to later Nobel Prizes. Each award comes with a \$100,000 stipend in Canadian dollars. The awards will be formally presented at a dinner in Toronto in late October.

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Media contact: Scott LaFee, 619-543-6163, slafee@ucsd.edu

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