

UCSD Professor Receives Top Honor in Field of Glycobiology

November 9, 2005

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Ajit Varki, M.D., Professor of Medicine and Co-Director of the Glycobiology Research and Training Center at the University of California, San Diego's School of Medicine has been named the 2005 Karl Meyer Award winner by The Society for Glycobiology.

This is the 14th annual award to be presented by the Society in recognition of an active leader who has made significant and on-going contributions to knowledge in the field of glycobiology - the study of molecules that contain carbohydrates, their structure and function, and the roles they play in biology.

"He is internationally recognized as one of the very top leaders in the field of glyobiology," said Dr. Ronald L. Schnaar, Department of Pharmacology, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and President of the Society for Glycobiology.

"Dr. Varki has contributed in many ways to the enormous growth in the field, not only through his own work with sialic acids and more recent studies on the evolution of sialic acids and complementary binding proteins, but also through his outstanding leadership in the international community, including serving as past President of the Society for Glycobiology," said Schnaar.

The research in Varki's lab is currently focused on a family of sugars called sialic acids, and their roles in biology, evolution and disease. Sialic acids are found at the outermost position on the glycan chains of all vertebrate cell surfaces and glycoproteins. His active research projects investigate the roles of sialic acids in viral and bacterial infection, immune response regulation and the progression of tumors. He is also studying the multiple differences in sialic acid biology between humans and great apes, differences that may be relevant to understanding aspects of human health and disease.

Varki is the lead author and editor of the most extensive textbook in the field, *The Essentials of Glycobiology*. He will present the award lecture, titled "From Man6P to Neu5Gc: a Love Affair with Glycans," at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Glycobiology, to be held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel in November.

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