

Cavenee Elected to Institute of Medicine

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The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has announced the election of Webster K. Cavenee, Ph.D., a University of California, San Diego-based researcher whose work has helped clarify how cancer develops and spreads, as a new member of the distinguished organization.

"Members are elected through a highly selective process that recognizes people who have made major contributions to the advancement of the medical sciences, health care, and public health," said IOM President Harvey V. Fineberg. "Election is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of medicine and health."

Cavenee is director of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research (LICR) San Diego Branch, which is located on the UC San Diego campus, and he is a professor of medicine and member of the Moores Cancer Center at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. He joins 64 other new members from leading institutions throughout the United States, and his election brings the number of UCSD members of IOM to 32.

"Web Cavenee has been one of the premier cancer biologists of the past two decades," said Kenneth Kaushansky, M.D., chair of the department of medicine at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. "His insights into the genetic changes that contribute to cancer development, and his innovative approaches to its therapy have been an inspiration to those who seek to impact human health."

"He has also been a scientific compass for our students, fellows, new faculty members and established investigators, and his leadership of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research in La Jolla has established the UCSD branch as the preeminent unit of that world-wide organization," said Kaushansky.

Cavenee, 54, is a molecular biologist whose research seeking to define the genetic lesions in retinoblastoma led to the first hard experimental evidence for the existence of tumor suppressor genes in humans. This breakthrough confirmed the "two-hit hypothesis," fundamentally altering the way scientists think about the onset of cancer and its progression. Today, mutations of tumor suppressor genes have been identified in more than half of all tumors, including those of muscle, melanocytes, kidney, prostate and breast. Novel gene therapies to reverse gene mutations or their effects in cancer cells hold promise as cancer treatment strategies which could be of benefit to cancer patients.

Cavenee is also a member of the National Academy of Sciences, a body of eminent researchers who advise the federal government on matters of science and public policy, and is a former president of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). In January 2007 the National Foundation for Cancer Research awarded him the 2nd Annual *Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research*, which was established to recognize outstanding scientific achievement in the war against cancer and to honor pioneering scientists who have made extraordinary contributions in the field of cancer research.

He is the recipient of several other prestigious awards, including the Charles S. Mott Prize of the General Motors Cancer Research Foundation, and the AACR Rhoads Award. He is on the editorial boards of several scientific journals, and is a guest editor for *Science*, *Nature* and *Human Genetics*. He has also served on the

board of both the Scientific Counselors of the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

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