David Cheresh Receives Top Award for Cancer Metastasis Research

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David A. Cheresh, PhD, professor of pathology at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and associate director for translational research at the Moores UCSD Cancer Center, has been named the 2010 recipient of the Paget-Ewing Award, the highest prize bestowed by the Metastasis Research Society, an international, non-profit organization that promotes scientific research involving metastasis.

Cheresh was honored at a recent joint meeting of the MRS and the American Association for Cancer Research in Philadelphia.

David Cheresh, PhD

Cheresh is the 10th recipient of the Paget-Ewing Award, which specifically celebrates scientific excellence and contributions to the understanding and control of cancer metastasis. The award is named after two pioneers in cancer research: Stephen Paget, an English surgeon who proposed the "seed and soil" theory of metastasis in 1899 and James Ewing, an American pathologist who significantly advanced understanding of how anatomical location and surrounding vascular systems affect tumors.

In recent research, Cheresh and colleagues identified a key microRNA molecule that controls a molecular switch governing blood vessel growth. Uncontrolled growth of blood vessels is a major problem in a broad range of diseases and conditions, including metastasizing or spreading tumors. The National Cancer Institute estimates as many as 500 million people worldwide could benefit from therapies controlling blood vessel growth, known as angiogenesis.

"I am very honored to receive this award, which has been given to some of the top people in the field," said Cheresh. "By better understanding metastasis, we can understand why most patients die from cancer. It's the spreading of the disease, not the primary tumor, that's the typical cause of mortality. If we can learn how cancer works and thrives at the molecular level, we can find new ways to influence and perhaps halt the progression of the disease."

As part of the award ceremonies, Cheresh also gave a lecture to more than 700 attending cancer scientists on the subject of microRNA-mediated regulation of the tumor angiogenic switch.

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