

Phelps Receives de Hevesy Nuclear Pioneer Award

Michael E. Phelps, PhD, the Norton Simon professor and chair of the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Department of Molecular and Medical Pharmacology, was named as the 2015 recipient of the Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Pioneer Award on June 7 at the SNMMI Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD. Phelps is also director of the Crump Institute for Molecular Imaging and a professor of biomathematics at UCLA. SNMMI has presented the de Hevesy Award each year since 1960 to honor groundbreaking discoveries and inventions in the field of nuclear medicine. de Hevesy received the 1943 Nobel Prize in chemistry for his work in investigating the absorption, distribution, metabolism, and elimination of radioactive compounds in the human body.

“Mike Phelps has made major contributions to the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging for more than 4 decades,” said SNMMI President Peter Herscovitch, MD, who presented the award. Herscovitch praised Phelps’s contributions to the development of PET imaging, which as a clinical tool has “changed the lives of millions of patients with cancer, brain disease, and heart disease” and as a biomedical research instrument “has helped to map the human brain and support the development of new pharmaceuticals.” Herscovitch added that Phelps “played a fundamental role in obtaining U.S. Food and Drug Administration [FDA] approval and insurance coverage for FDG PET. He has made many novel contributions to molecular imaging and, as a teacher, has mentored generations of physicians and scientists in our field. Mike is a true nuclear medicine pioneer. It is most appropriate that his numerous contributions be recognized with the de Hevesy Nuclear Medicine Pioneer Award.”

Phelps earned his undergraduate degree in chemistry and mathematics from Western Washington State University (Bellingham, WA) in 1965 and received his doctoral degree in chemistry from Washington University (St. Louis, MO) in 1970. At Washington University, he worked with Edward Hoffman, PhD, in developing PET and providing early evidence of the effectiveness of PET imaging in oncology, neurologic disorders, and cardiovascular disease. Moving to UCLA in 1976, Phelps established and directed the first clinical PET center at the UCLA School of Medicine.

Phelps has published 4 books and more than 720 scientific papers and has been the recipient of more than \$350 million in research funding. He has received multiple awards and honors for contributions to nuclear medicine science and instrumentation. Among these are the 1978 and



Michael E. Phelps, PhD (center), receives 2015 de Hevesy Award from Johannes Czernin, MD (left), and Peter Herscovitch, MD (right).

1982 George von Hevesy Prize from the von Hevesy Foundation, the 1983 Paul C. Aebbersold Award from SNM, the 1984 Sarah L. Poiley Memorial Award from the New York Academy of Sciences, the 1984 Ernest O. Lawrence Presidential Award, the 1987 Rosenthal Foundation Award of the American College of Physicians, the 1992 Pasarow Foundation Award, and the 1998 Enrico Fermi Presidential Award from President Bill Clinton. Phelps chaired the 1983 Nobel Symposium and gave the keynote address at the 2012 Nobel Symposium, received the 2012 Gold Medal Award from the World Molecular Imaging Society, and was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 1985 and the National Academy of Sciences in 1999.

“It is with respect and appreciation that I accept the SNMMI 2015 Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Pioneer Award,” Phelps said. “I accept this award in representation of the hundreds of faculty, students, and staff at UCLA who contributed to the research and clinical practice of PET. Added to this are the efforts of faculty from medical schools across our great country in producing the evidence for FDA approval and reimbursement. This made it possible for molecular imaging diagnostics of the biology of disease with PET to improve outcomes for patients. All those involved over the years shared a common passion and belief in the value that would come from their relentless commitment to making PET a reality in science and medicine.”