Trio of Distinguished Researchers Share de Hevesy Award

On June 14, during the 56th Annual Meeting of the SNM in Toronto, Canada, 3 scientists were presented with the 2009 Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Pioneer Award for contributions in bringing ^{99m}Tc into routine use in a range of nuclear medicine applications. The award went to Alan Davison, PhD, Alun G. Jones, PhD, and Michael J. Abrams, PhD. Davison, a professor emeritus of chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT; Cambridge, MA), and Jones, a professor of radiology at the Harvard Medical School and the Brigham and Women's Hospital (Boston, MA), began a systematic exploration of the basic chemistry of technetium in 1976. In 1981, these investigators, together with Abrams (then a graduate student in Davison's laboratory), discovered a new class of technetium complexes that localized in cardiac tissue after intravenous administration. This led directly to the development of radiolabeled myocardial perfusion imaging agents to assess cardiac status under rest and stress.

Davison, who grew up in Wales, earned his undergraduate degree in chemistry from the University College of Swansea (Wales) in 1959. After completing graduate studies with Nobel laureate Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson, he received a doctorate in chemistry from the Imperial College of Science and Technology (London, UK). He began his teaching and research career in 1962 as an instructor in chemistry at Harvard University and joined the chemistry faculty at MIT in1964. He is a fellow of the Royal Society and the recipient of numerous previous awards. He holds several patents and is the author of more than 250 publications. Davison became an emeritus professor in 2005 and continues to evaluate potential agents and the biological distribution of new technetium complexes in collaboration with Jones—with the expectation of developing new technetium radiopharmaceutical agents.

Jones, an SNM member, is currently director of the radiopharmaceutical chemistry section at Harvard Medical School's Laboratory for Experimental Nuclear Medicine. He received his doctorate in nuclear chemistry from the University of Liverpool (UK) and, after postdoctoral positions in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and at MIT, joined Harvard University in 1971. With Davison, he holds several patents and has been the recipient of numerous awards. Jones has published more than 200 peer-reviewed articles, and his research interests continue to focus on the development of radiodiagnostic agents and novel applications of radioactive compounds to medical problems. In 1993, Davison and Jones shared the SNM Paul C. Aebersold Award for Outstanding Achievement in Basic Science Applied to Nuclear Medicine.

De Hevesy award winners Davison (left), Abrams, and Jones, with Atcher.

Abrams, of Custer, WA, an adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia, has been active in the research, discovery, and development of pharmaceuticals for more than 25 y. He earned his doctorate from MIT. In 1996, Abrams founded AnorMED, a biopharmaceutical company focused on drugs for cancer and HIV treatment, where he was president and chief executive officer for more than a decade. He serves as a director on the boards of Tekmira, Indel Therapeutics, the Centre for Drug Research and Development, and Vida Therapeutics. He is a co-inventor of several products currently in clinical trials, is an inventor on 25 patents, and has authored more than 60 scientific articles.

SNM has given the de Hevesy Award every year since 1960 to honor groundbreaking scientific work. The award is presented to an individual or individuals for outstanding contributions to the field of nuclear medicine. De Hevesy received the 1943 Nobel Prize in chemistry for his work in determining the absorption, distribution, metabolism, and elimination of radioactive compounds in the human body. His research led to the foundation of nuclear medicine as a tool for diagnosis and therapy. "The list of previous recipients of this award is impressive and includes numerous Nobel laureates—such as Ernest Lawrence, who built the world's first cyclotron for the production of radionuclides, and Glenn Seaborg, who discovered more than half a dozen new elements," said Robert Atcher, PhD, MBA, then SNM president, who presented the awards. "These 3 innovators join a select group of scientists whose research is deemed to have had a significant impact on medicine."

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