

Alavi and Larson Awarded 2012 Benedict Cassen Prize

Abass Alavi, MD, and Steven Larson, MD, known for their substantial research and contributions to the field of nuclear medicine, were awarded the Benedict Cassen Prize on June 11 at the SNM (now SNMMI) 2012 Annual Meeting in Miami Beach, FL. This honor is given every 2 years by the Education and Research Foundation for SNM to living scientists or physician/scientists whose work has led to a major advance in basic or clinical nuclear medicine science. “We honor Dr. Alavi for his contributions in the development of modern imaging techniques, including PET, as revolutionary tools for conducting basic science research and improving patient care, as well as Dr. Larson for his research and leadership, which have advanced nuclear medicine science, especially in the uses of radionuclides for diagnosis and treatment of cancer,” said Peter Conti, MD, PhD, in presenting the awards.

During a special plenary session, Alavi and Larson co-presented the Cassen Lectureship, which focused on the evolution of FDG PET imaging techniques over the past 3 decades. Alavi discussed the unparalleled contributions of PET to medicine, and Larson outlined achievements in molecular imaging and therapy in advanced prostate and thyroid cancer. The Cassen Prize honors Benedict Cassen, whose invention of the rectilinear radioisotope scanner was seminal in the development of clinical nuclear medicine. Alavi and Larson are among only 12 individuals who have been presented this prestigious \$25,000 award since 1994.

Trained in internal medicine, hematology, and nuclear medicine, Alavi is currently a professor of radiology and director of research education at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (Philadelphia). He has conducted pioneering research in PET, SPECT, CT, MR, and hybrid modalities. Alavi earned his medical degree from the University of Tehran School of Medicine in 1964. He then traveled to the United States and completed residencies at the Albert Einstein Medical Center and the Veterans Administration Hospital (both in Philadelphia, PA) as well as at Beth Israel Hospital (Boston, MA). He completed fellowships in hematology and nuclear medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. During his career at the University of Pennsylvania, Alavi has been a prolific researcher, with activities supported primarily by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He has published more than 900 scientific papers; more than 150 book chapters, editorials, and reviews; and 34 books, making him the most published and cited faculty member at his institution. He has served in editorial positions for many journals and currently is the consulting editor for *PET Clinics* and editor in chief of *Current Molecular Imaging and Advances in Bioscience and Biotechnology*. Alavi has also mentored more than 140 trainees in nuclear medicine, some of whom are international leaders in the field.

Alavi has received numerous awards and honors recognizing his contributions to the field of nuclear medicine, including the SNM Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Pioneer and Berson-Yalow Awards; the Fred Joliot Visiting Professorship at Orsay, France; and the Vic Haughton Honorary Lecture from the American Society of Functional Neuroradiology. He has received honorary doctorates from the University of Bologna, Italy, and the University of the Sciences, Philadelphia.



Peter Conti, MD, PhD, presents Cassen Prize to Abass Alavi, MD (left), and Steven Larson, MD (right).

Larson has emphasized the translation of preclinical discoveries and radiotracer development into research and advanced nuclear medicine practice. His PET research has emphasized treatment response assessment, especially in prostate, thyroid, esophageal, and breast cancer. Larson is an attending physician in the Department of Radiology at Weill Cornell University Medical Center and a professor in the Department of Radiology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC; both in New York, NY). He is chief of the nuclear medicine service, vice chair for radiology research, director of the Laurent and Alberta Gerschel PET Center, and Donna & Benjamin M. Rosen Chair in Radiology in the Department of Radiology at MSKCC. Larson is also co-leader of the Imaging and Radiation Sciences Bridge Program (ImRas) at MSKCC. He is laboratory head of the Molecular Pharmacology and Chemistry Program and co-director of the Ludwig Trust Center for Immunotherapy of Sloan Kettering Institute. In addition, he serves as chair of the board of the Light of Life Foundation, a patient-centered thyroid cancer group dedicated to public education.

Larson earned his undergraduate and medical degrees at the University of Washington (Seattle). He completed an internship and residency at Virginia Mason Hospital (Seattle) and 2 fellowships at the University of Washington. He served for 2 years as a clinical associate in the Department of Nuclear Medicine at NIH.

Larson has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Wylie Medal of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; the SNM Wagner Lecture Award; the Georg Charles de Hevesy Awards of both the SNM and its European counterpart; the Sarabhai lecture medal of the Society of Nuclear Medicine, India; and the Pendergrass Award of the Radiological Society of North America. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and is the 2007 Academy of Molecular Imaging Distinguished Clinician Scientist.