Cherry Receives 2022 Benedict Cassen Prize

Simon R. Cherry, PhD, known for his pioneering work in the development of PET technology and codevelopment of the EXPLORER total-body PET scanner, was awarded the Benedict Cassen Prize during the June SNMMI 2022 Annual Meeting in Vancouver, Canada. This honor is awarded every 2 years by the Education and Research Foundation (ERF) for Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging in recognition of outstanding achievement and work leading to a major advance in nuclear medicine science.

"Dr. Cherry has dedicated his whole career to advancing molecular imaging," said ERF President Munir Ghesani, MD. "This award is a wonderful recognition of his seminal contributions to nuclear medicine instrumentation and molecular imaging generally, including his pioneering advancement of small-animal PET, PET/MR hybrid imaging, and total-body PET."

During a special plenary session at SNMMI's Annual Meeting, Cherry delivered the Cassen Lecture, titled "A Matter of Time." He discussed historical developments contributing to today's molecular imaging technologies.

Cherry received his undergraduate degree in physics and astronomy from University College London (UK) in 1986 and his doctorate in medical physics from the Institute of Cancer Research at the University of London in 1989. After a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), he joined the faculty in the UCLA Department of Molecular and Medical Pharmacology in 1993. In 2001, he went to the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) as a professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering and established the Center for Molecular and Genomic Imaging, which he directed from 2004 to 2016. Cherry served as chair of the Department of Biomedical Engineering from 2007 to 2009 and is currently a Distinguished Professor at UC Davis. He is a coleader of the EXPLORER project with Ramsey Badawi, PhD.

Cherry is a founding member of the Society for Molecular Imaging (now the World Molecular Imaging Society) and an elected fellow of 6 professional societies, including the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and the Biomedical Engineering Society. He received the Academy of Molecular Imaging Distinguished Basic Scientist Award (2007), the Society for Molecular Imaging Achievement Award (2011), and the IEEE Marie Sklodowska-Curie Award

Simon R. Cherry, PhD, with Ramsey Badawi, PhD (left), and Munir Ghesani, MD (right).

(2016) for "contributions to the development and application of in vivo molecular imaging systems." In 2016, he was elected to the National Academy of Engineering and in 2017 to the National Academy of Inventors. Cherry has authored more than 300 peer-reviewed journal articles, review articles, and book chapters in the field of biomedical imaging. He is also lead author of the widely used textbook *Physics in Nuclear Medicine*, now in its 4th edition.

The Cassen Prize honors Benedict Cassen (1902–1972), whose invention of the rectilinear radioisotope scanner—the first instrument capable of making an image of radiotracer distribution in body organs of living patients—was seminal to the development of clinical nuclear medicine. Cherry is the 16th individual since 1994 to receive this prestigious $25,000 award from the ERF.

"It is a tremendous honor to receive the Benedict Cassen Prize," Cherry said. "In our quest to develop much more sensitive PET systems, we hope to improve our understanding of the human body in both health and disease and open up future applications for the field of molecular imaging, while at the same time improving diagnosis and disease management for patients today. These new systems that are being developed by us and others are the logical and ultimate manifestation of Benedict Cassen's pioneering work on organ and body imaging, and it is therefore particularly meaningful to receive an award named after him."