

News

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* * * * Dr. Roger Unger of UTHSCD and VA Medical Center receives honorary doctorate on 1,000th anniversary of University of Liege, Belgium.

DALLAS--Dr. Roger Unger, professor of internal medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas, will receive a rare honor Dec. 12 when he will be awarded an honorary doctor's degree (docteur honoris causa) on the 1,000th anniversary of the University of Liege in Liege, Belgium.

The 1,000-year-old university will be honoring Unger for his work on the hormone glucagon and diabetes.

The proposition accompanying the degree discusses his early laboratory work, stating in part: "In 1959-60 he developed a radioimmunological assay for glucagon and used it to determine that glucagon is a hormone and to define its physiological importance in fuel metabolism.

"Unger's past 10 years' work has permitted him to advance (the idea that) diabetes results not only from an insulin deficiency, which results in the under-utilization of glucose, but also from an excess of glucagon, which causes overproduction of glucose by the liver.

"This new concept of the pathophysiology of diabetes was initially criticized. In a series of monumental experiments Unger demonstrated the solid foundation of his theory and convinced the interested scientific circles. He thus opened a new avenue for the therapy of diabetes.

"The recent Congress of the International Federation (Vienna, 1979) recognized the promise of the treatment of this disease, which affects two to four percent of the (world) population."

Further the University of Liege praises the researcher as a man. "Dr. Unger is one of those rare Americans who expresses himself perfectly in French and whose bonds with our alma mater are numerous. We think that in bestowing docteur honoris causa, the University of Liege will be recognizing one of those in the tradition of Langerhans, Minkowski, Banting and Best who has enriched knowledge in the domain of diabetes and above all by rigorous experimentation has opened the way to a therapeutic approach to this difficult disease."

Unger is one of 20 people to be honored in Liege.

In September Unger traveled to Athens to receive the Claude Bernard Medal, the highest award given by the European Association for the Study of Diabetes.

The distinguished researcher is a senior medical investigator at the Dallas Veterans Administration Medical Center. He has previously received both the Banting Medal and the Lilly Award of the American Diabetes Association, the David Rumbough Jr. Memorial Award for Scientific Achievement of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, the Veterans Administration's Middleton Award and the Gold Medal of the University of Liege. He also has been awarded an honorary Doctor of Medicine degree and the Fernand Tissot Award from the University of Geneva and the Tinsley R. Harrison Award of the Southern Section of the American Federation for Clinical Research.

Unger is principal investigator of an on-going research project on diabetes among the Pima Indians near Phoenix, Ariz. The project is funded by the National Institute of Arthritis, Metabolism and Digestive Diseases.

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