

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## SÜDHOF NAMED NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES MOLECULAR BIOLOGY WINNER

DALLAS — February 10, 1997 — The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has named Dr. Thomas C. Südhof of UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas 1997 co-recipient of its prestigious Award in Molecular Biology Supported by the Monsanto Company for his work in studying how information is relayed in the brain.

The selection committee is made up of members of the National Academy. Their decision is based on which of the nominees has made the greatest contribution to the field of molecular biology.

Südhof, professor of molecular genetics and investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at UT Southwestern, will share the NAS award with Dr. Richard Scheller of Stanford University School of Medicine. Each will receive a gold-plated bronze medal and share in the \$20,000 prize.

The citation for the Monsanto Award says that Südhof and Scheller are being recognized for "their performance of elegant experiments to resolve the molecular components responsible for controlling neurotransmitter vesicle release and chemical communications within the nervous system."

Südhof's research focuses on isolating and characterizing membrane receptors and synaptic-vesicle proteins. This work has laid the foundation for molecular analysis of vesicle-associated proteins within nerve cells and other secretory cells.

Currently his laboratory explores neurotransmission, which is the relay of information from one neuron to another in the brain. Specifically, his research team is investigating the mechanism by which synapses and neurotransmitters are released from cells.

"I was very surprised when I was told of being honored by the National Academy and the Monsanto Company," Südhof said. "I didn't even know that I'd been nominated. I'm very honored and flattered that the selection committee of NAS thinks so highly of my work."

(MORE)

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Südhof received his medical degree from the Georgia Augusta University of Göttingen, Germany, in 1982. He did postdoctoral work at the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen and with Nobelists Drs. Michael Brown and Joseph Goldstein at UT Southwestern. He accepted his position at UT Southwestern in 1986 and holds the Gill Distinguished Chair in Neuroscience Research.

"Dr. Thomas Südhof is the first member elected from our faculty to receive this prestigious National Academy of Sciences Award in Molecular Biology," Goldstein said.

"This award has a fascinating history. It was first presented in 1962 to Marshall Nirenberg for his discovery of the genetic code. The roster of subsequent recipients has been equally impressive and includes such well-known scientists as Walter Gilbert, Howard Temin, David Baltimore, Daniel Nathans, Mark Ptashne, Phillip Sharp, Günter Blobel, Tom Cech and Steve McKnight.

Dr. Steven McKnight, who became chairman of biochemistry at UT Southwestern in September 1996, received the Monsanto Award in 1991 while he was affiliated with Carnegie Institution of Washington in Baltimore, Md.

"To be included amongst this awesome group is a great honor not only for Thomas but also for our institution, where all of his work on the molecular biology of synaptic vesicles has been done," Goldstein said.

Südhof's research also has earned him the 1994 Wilhelm Feldberg Award and the 1993 W. Alden Spencer Award from Columbia University. He serves on the Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Neurobiology Review Committee for the National Institutes of Mental Health.

The NAS Monsanto Award will be presented April 28 in Washington, D.C., at a ceremony during the academy's annual meeting. The National Academy of Sciences is a private organization of scientists dedicated to furthering science and its use for the general welfare. Congress established the academy in 1863, and the act establishing it was signed by Abraham Lincoln. Upon request, NAS acts as official advisor to the federal government in any matter of science or technology. Ten members of UT Southwestern's faculty are members of NAS.

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