

Benvenuto Annual Award Recipients

Emil J. Freireich, M.D.

1999

Emil Frei, M.D.

2000

Ti Li Loo, D.Phil.

2001

Sidney Wallace, M.D.

2002

Jaffer Ajani, M.D.

2003

David Farquhar, Ph.D.

2004

William G. Dunphy, Ph.D.

2008

Tony Hunter, Ph.D.

2009

Ferid Murad, M.D., Ph.D.

2010

Michael B. Kastan, M.D., Ph.D.

2011

Ronald A. DePinho, M.D.

2012

Victor R. Ambros, Ph.D

2013

Frank McCormick, Ph.D., F.R.S.

2014

James P. Allison, Ph.D.

2015

Levi A. Garraway, M.D., Ph.D.

2016

Jennifer A. Doudna, Ph.D.

2017

Bert W. O'Malley, M.D.

2018

Alfred L. Goldberg, Ph. D.

2019

Guillermina (Gigi) Lozano, Ph.D.

2021

Steven Rosenberg, M.D., Ph.D.

2022

Joseph Schlessinger, M.D., Ph.D.

2023

2024

Benvenuto Memorial Lecture

featuring

Dr. Craig M. Crews

PROTACs and Targeted Protein Degradation: A New Therapeutic Modality

Great strides have been made in identifying disease-causing proteins that should be targeted pharmaceutically. However, more than 70% of the proteome is not currently pharmaceutically vulnerable due to the lack of an inhibitor binding pocket. Fortunately, current clinical trials are demonstrating the potential of PROTACs as a novel therapeutic modality, which will hopefully expand the oncology Drug Target Space in the coming years.

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

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JOHN A. BENVENUTO, PH.D.

Born in Detroit, Michigan on January 30, 1944, John A. Benvenuto, received a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from Wayne State University. He went on to attend West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia, earning a Master of Science degree and a Doctor of Philosophy degree, both in chemistry. Dr. Benvenuto joined The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in 1973 and received postgraduate training in Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmacology in the Department of Developmental Therapeutics under Ti Li Loo, D.Phil., D.Sc. In 1975, he became a member of the MD Anderson faculty. Additionally, he was a faculty member of The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in Houston.

Widely recognized in the scientific community for his expertise in clinical and biochemical pharmacology, Dr. Benvenuto published extensively on the mechanism of action of anticancer drugs. He was a member of the American Chemical Society, the American Association of Cancer Research, the American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the World Health Organization International Agency for Research on Cancer, Alpha Chi Sigma and Sigma Xi.

In 1986, Dr. Benvenuto learned he was afflicted with a metastatic carcinoid tumor. Through the efforts of staff at MD Anderson and his own indomitable spirit, Dr. Benvenuto made a miraculous recovery and returned to work in 1987. He continued to work full time until his death on December 22, 1996 – nearly 10 years later.

Often in pain and discomfort as he battled systemic cancer in the last years of his life, Dr. Benvenuto never complained. Indeed, his major concern was for the welfare of his friends and colleagues. A man of great dignity and personal warmth, Dr. Benvenuto left a lasting impression on all who knew him; his tremendous courage and unwavering optimism are an inspiration. Dr. Benvenuto's family and friends designed this lectureship as a tribute to perpetuate his memory.



CRAIG M. CREWS, PH.D.

Dr. Craig Crews is the John C. Malone Professor of MCDDB and professor of Chemistry and Pharmacology at Yale University. He graduated from the University of Virginia with a B.A. in Chemistry and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in Biochemistry. On the faculty at Yale since 1995, his laboratory has developed the use of small molecules to control intracellular protein levels. In 2003, he co-founded Proteolix, Inc., whose proteasome inhibitor, Kyprolis™ received FDA approval for the treatment of multiple myeloma. The Crews' lab is also credited with founding the field of "Targeted Protein Degradation" drug development technology, i.e., PROTACs, which has the potential to target currently 'undruggable' disease causing proteins. In 2013, Dr. Crews launched the New Haven-based biotech venture, Arvinas, Inc., which is testing the first PROTAC-based drugs in clinical trials for prostate and breast cancer. Since then he had founded two additional biopharmas, Halda Therapeutics and Siduma Therapeutics. Dr. Crews has received numerous awards and honors, including the Ehrlich Award for Medicinal Chemistry (2014), a NIH R35 Outstanding Investigator Award (2015), the AACR Award for Outstanding Achievement in Chemistry in Cancer Research (2017), the Khorana Prize from the Royal Society of Chemistry (2018), the Pierre Fabre Award for Therapeutic Innovation (2018), the Pharmacia-ASPET Award for Experimental Therapeutics (2019), the Heinrich Wieland Prize (2020), the Scheele Prize (2021), an honorary doctoral degree from the Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany (doctor rerum naturalium honoris causa) (2021), the Connecticut Medal of Technology (2022), the inaugural Bristol Myers Squibb Award in Enzyme Chemistry (2023), the Gabbay Prize (2023), the Kimberly Prize (2024) and the IUPAC-Richter Prize (2024).