

Canadians Honored with International Prize for Medicine in Saudi Arabia

Canadian rheumatology was recognized on the international stage this past March, as Drs. Jean-Pierre Pelletier and Johanne Martel-Pelletier accepted this year's prestigious King Faisal International Prize for Medicine.

Dr. Martel-Pelletier, a Montreal researcher and Dr. Pelletier, a researcher/rheumatologist, along with Dr. Reinhold Ganz, a German professor who dedicated his career to the study and treatment of diseases of the hip joint including conservative hip surgery, were recognized for their research in non-arthroplasty management of degenerative disease. Over their nearly 30 year career, the work of these two Canadians has helped in the research of osteoarthritis—a debilitating articular joint disease that affects more than 15% of the Canadian population.

“We have been the fortunate recipients of a number of distinguished awards [in this field],” said Dr. Pelletier. “[We received] the Carol-Nachman Award for Rheumatology, a prize given in Germany by the Chancellor in 1996, the Roussel EULAR Award for Scientific Research in 1991, and the Novartis-ILAR Rheumatology Prize in 2001.” Dr. Pelletier was also awarded the Canadian Rheumatology Association's Distinguished Investigator Award in 2000.

Since its inception in 1976, 55 scholars from 11 countries have won the King Faisal International Prize for Medicine, including two other Canadians—Professor Tak W. Mak and Professor Fernand Labrie.

The award ceremony took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, under the auspices of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and the King Faisal Foundation. “It was truly a unique experience with royal treatment,” said Dr. Pelletier. Drs. Pelletier and Martel-Pelletier accepted their award in the presence of



Drs. Pelletier and Martel-Pelletier have won many awards together over their 30 year career.

1,200 high ranking guests, including the reigning King and his family, and fellow awardees. (Six others received awards for their service to Islam, Arabic language and literature or science.) The award included a certificate describing the winner's work written in Arabic and a commemorative medallion. After the ceremony, the guests were treated to a Saudi Arabian feast.

While in Saudi Arabia, Drs. Pelletier and Martel-Pelletier also guest lectured at a few local universities.

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