

The Henry G. Friesen

INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

in Health Research

LE PRIX INTERNATIONAL

de la Recherche en Santé Henry G. Friesen

(Est. 2005)



News release: Sept. 22, 2009, 4:30 p.m.

Oxford professor urges personalized approach to the prevention and treatment of disease

*Professor Sir John Bell – the Canadian at the top of UK academic medicine -
delivers prestigious Friesen Prize Lecture in Ottawa*

OTTAWA - Personalized medicine, in which prevention and treatment are tailored to a patient's unique genetic profile, is the future of healthcare, says Regius Professor of Medicine (Oxford) and geneticist Sir John Bell, recipient of the 2009 Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research.

"We now understand many of the molecular and cellular events associated with disease onset," says Canadian-born Dr. Bell, who delivered the prestigious Friesen Lecture in Ottawa today. Rather than classify diseases based on symptoms, a new approach is needed to define illness at the genetic level.

Many hundreds of genes are involved in the beginning and the progression of common conditions, such as hardening of the arteries, diabetes, arthritis and kidney failure. "Our ability to accurately use current diagnostic tools to predict the course of disease has proven to be limited," Dr. Bell says. As a result, most new medicines have beneficial effects in only 30-50% of the patients who receive them.

"We are on the threshold of new ways of grouping patients and their diseases and of characterizing them based on a chain of biological events, rather than how patients appear clinically," Dr. Bell says. "The door is opening to an era of profound improvement in our ability to prevent, predict, diagnose, manage and treat all common diseases."

The Friesen International Prize, established by the Friends of Canadian Institutes of Health Research in collaboration with the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, recognizes exceptional innovation by a visionary health leader of international stature.

"Dr. Bell's vision and ability in furthering health research and health care policy in the United Kingdom and internationally, have advanced the field of human medical genetics immeasurably," says Dr. Aubie Angel, president of Friends of CIHR.

Dr. Bell has been extensively involved in the development of genetics and genomics programs in patient-related research across the UK and elsewhere. He is the founder of the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics and, in 2008 he was appointed Chair of the Office of Strategic Coordination of Health Research (OSCHR) by the British Government. In that capacity, Dr. Bell will help facilitate translation of health research into economic and social benefit.

For more information, please contact:

Cristina S. Castellvi, Friends of CIHR (416) 506-1597

The Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research was established in 2005 by the Friends of Canadian Institutes of Health Research (FCIHR) in recognition of Dr. Henry Friesen's distinguished leadership, vision and innovative contributions to health and health research.

The \$25,000 Friesen Prize is awarded annually.

For further information on Friends of CIHR and the Friesen International Prize, please visit: www.fcibr.ca