

HAROLD HAMM INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH IN DIABETES

2013 LAUREATE

PETER H. BENNETT, MB, CHB, FRCP, FFPH

Dr. Peter H. Bennett is regarded internationally as one of the most foundational and forward-thinking researchers to have worked in the field of diabetes. Throughout his career spanning more than fifty years, Dr. Bennett has continuously made contributions to the worldwide scientific community in the understanding of diabetes and its complications, impacting the ways we treat and prevent the disease today, and driving forward progress toward a cure for diabetes in the future.

Educated at the Victoria University Manchester Medical School in Manchester, England, Dr. Bennett served as Chief of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) Phoenix Epidemiology and Clinical Research Branch, the National Institutes of Health branch charged with diabetes research. He currently serves as Scientist Emeritus at NIH.

Dr. Bennett was the first to initiate a major longitudinal study of type 2 diabetes and its complications, leading to the initial identification of many risk factors for diabetes such as obesity, lack of physical activity, and insulin resistance. After observing an unusually high prevalence of diabetes in the Pima Indians of Arizona, Dr. Bennett worked with them and initiated this study which lasted more than 40 years. The study resulted in the basis for the development of criteria used internationally for diagnosing diabetes and impaired glucose tolerance, also referred to as pre-diabetes. Adopted by the World Health Organization in 1980, these criteria have endured and remain as the internationally accepted criteria to this day.

Dr. Bennett was also the first to introduce the concept that type 2 diabetes is preventable. He played an instrumental role in the Da Qing Diabetes Prevention Study in China which proved that type 2 diabetes can be avoided through increased levels of physical activity and decreased obesity. These findings played a major role in the National Institutes of Health establishment of the Diabetes Prevention Program, which has been translated into far-reaching prevention programs across the United States, and modeled around the world.

Dr. Bennett has also contributed to – and in many cases initiated – numerous other international studies of diabetes. Among the accomplishments of these studies were the recognition that there are many specific populations, such as Pacific islanders, with high diabetes rates, and the recognition of the emergence of major epidemics of diabetes in China, India, the Middle East, and other regions where lifestyles are rapidly changing.

In pursuing these discoveries and many more, Dr. Bennett fostered a multidisciplinary approach among researchers studying diabetes from a variety of different fields, bringing diverse ideas together to lead to breakthroughs. He established a unique environment for hundreds of geneticists, clinicians, epidemiologists, physiologists, nutritionists and many others to expand knowledge of diabetes and change the way in which we view the disease forever.

Perhaps the most significant lasting impact of all is Dr. Bennett's dedication to mentoring and training the next generation of diabetes researchers, no doubt expanding his influence well beyond the length of his personal career. More than 50 scientists have been directly mentored by Dr. Bennett since the 1970's, many now holding leadership positions in academic and federal

institutions focused on diabetes and its complications.

Dr. Bennett continues to this day to encourage novel research in diabetes through a series of international diabetes epidemiology training courses, reaching more than 800 young diabetes researchers around the world, most of whom have gone on to earn prestigious leadership positions in the most influential research institutions. He has organized, led, or taught in courses sponsored internationally by the World Health Organization, International Diabetes Federation, International Diabetes Epidemiology Group, Chinese Academy of Science, and many other diabetes organizations in the Americas, Africa, Asia-Pacific, Cameroon, Japan, Australia, and Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Bennett has been bestowed with many awards recognizing his unprecedented contributions to diabetes research. Among others, he has won 19 major awards for diabetes research, virtually all those available in the field, including both the Kelly West Award and the Banting Medal for given by the American Diabetes Association, and recently the Harold Rifkin Award for Distinguished International Service. He also has been awarded 13 honorary memberships, belongs to 14 scholarly societies, and has presented 91 honorary lectureships.

Researchers and healthcare professionals from Arizona to Asia, and everywhere in between have used Dr. Bennett's groundbreaking research to further advance our understanding of diabetes and diabetes-its complications. Dr. Bennett's application of a masterly command of scientific methodology has opened new vistas of understanding of diabetes in man and pioneered fundamental new approaches to the prevention of the disease and its complications.