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Robert Malenka Receives Julius Axelrod Prize

WASHINGTON, DC — The Society for Neuroscience (SfN) will award the Julius Axelrod Prize to Robert Malenka, MD, PhD, of Stanford University School of Medicine. The Julius Axelrod Prize recognizes exceptional achievements in neuropharmacology or a related field and exemplary efforts in mentoring young scientists. The \$25,000 prize, supported by the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation, will be presented during Neuroscience 2016, SfN's annual meeting and the world's largest source of emerging news about brain science and health.

“The Society is pleased to honor Dr. Malenka for making fundamental contributions to our understanding of synaptic plasticity — a key neural process implicated in learning and memory,” SfN President Hollis Cline said. “Dr. Malenka has also mentored a large number of trainees who have gone on to establish successful independent research careers as faculty members at leading biomedical institutions worldwide.”

Over the last three decades, Malenka has made major discoveries that have laid the foundation for our understanding of the physiological properties, molecular mechanisms, and functions of synaptic plasticity. His scientific reputation was established with his initial studies of long-term potentiation (LTP) and long-term depression (LTD) triggered by NMDA receptors in the hippocampus. These long-lasting activity-dependent changes in the efficacy of synaptic transmission play an important role in the development of neural circuits and may mediate many forms of learning and memory. As both a psychiatrist and neurobiologist, Malenka has been at the forefront of applying the knowledge gained from basic research to the understanding of a wide range of brain disorders, including epilepsy, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, drug addiction, depression, and schizophrenia. He has trained and mentored over 100 postdoctoral fellows and students including Antonello Bonci, scientific director of NIDA; Alison Barth, Professor at Carnegie Mellon University; Karl Deisseroth, the Chen Professor at Stanford University; and Nicole Calakos, Professor at Duke University.

Malenka earned his MD and PhD from Stanford University School of Medicine. He is currently the Nancy Friend Pritzker Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and director of the Nancy Friend Pritzker Laboratory at Stanford University School of Medicine. He is also the Associate Chair for Scientific Discovery in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and Deputy Director of the Stanford Neurosciences Institute.

Julius Axelrod was a longtime member of SfN and shared the 1970 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of the actions of neurotransmitters in regulating the metabolism of the nervous system. His well-known work on brain chemistry led to current treatments for depression and anxiety disorders and played a key role in the discovery of the pain-relieving properties of acetaminophen. Throughout his career, Axelrod mentored dozens of young scientists, many of whom have gone on to have distinguished careers in neuroscience and pharmacology. He died in 2004 at age 92.

The [Society for Neuroscience \(SfN\)](#) is an organization of nearly 38,000 basic scientists and clinicians who study the brain and nervous system.