

MEDIA RELEASE

Cancer fighter in Nobel footsteps

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The University of Queensland professor behind the world's first cervical cancer vaccine will receive one of Australia's most prestigious medical awards tonight.

Professor Ian Frazer, the 2006 Australian of the Year and Director of UQ's Diamantina Institute for Cancer, Immunology and Metabolic Medicine, will be awarded the Merck Sharp & Dohme Florey Medal.

The biannual Florey Medal carries a \$25,000 prize and is part of the Australian Institute of Policy and Science's Tall Poppy Campaign, which encourages children to study science.

The Florey Medal is named in honour of Sir Howard Florey, the penicillin inventor who was Australia's first Nobel Laureate in Medicine.

Professor Frazer said it was an honour to receive the award on behalf of the team of people involved in developing human papillomavirus (HPV) cervical cancer vaccines, especially his UQ colleague, the late Dr Jian Zhou.

"This award recognises Florey's major achievements in delivering penicillin where it was needed and more generally the importance of delivering the benefits of scientific research to the community," Professor Frazer said.

UQ Vice Chancellor Professor John Hay AC said the Florey Medal was absolutely appropriate recognition for Professor Frazer.

"The Florey Medal indicates a milestone achievement in biomedical science and human health advancement based on Australian research," Professor Hay said.

"Past winners include Professor Barry Marshall and Professor Robin Warren, who subsequently received the 2005 Nobel Prize in Medicine for their work involving gastritis, stomach ulcers and antibiotics.

"Ian Frazer, whose discovery has the potential to wipe out a cancer that annually kills about 270,000 women worldwide, deserves to be in such distinguished company."

Professor Rick McLean, Chair of the Tall Poppy Campaign and medal selection committee member, said Professor Frazer was the clear choice from 20 top ranking scientists for this year's award.

"Professor Frazer was the clear winner, reflecting the public health significance of the cervical cancer vaccine here and around the world," Professor McLean said.

The award selection panel comprised 10 leading medical and science researchers and commentators in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

Professor Frazer will be presented with the award at 6.15pm at the University of NSW.

The Diamantina Institute for Cancer, Immunology and Metabolic Medicine has nearly 200 researchers and students based at UQ's Princess Alexandra Hospital teaching campus in Brisbane.

It is focused on improving patient treatment through research on immunology, cancer cell biology and metabolism.

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