

EASL Awardee 2007

Professor Michael P. Manns, MD
30 years on the frontline of the war against hepatitis



After nearly 40 years of being an EASL member, it is a real privilege to present this award to another of its truly outstanding and loyal members whose association with EASL has lasted nearly 30 years – Michael Manns.

Back in the late 70s, when I was involved with EASL as a committee member I had many an opportunity to meet and collaborate with one of my oldest professional friends, Karl Meyer zum Buschenfelde (MZB). At that time, he was a professor at the Free University in Berlin and he had a young investigator working with him who was to go on to become a leader and expert in the field of autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) and hepatitis C. Although the science was of importance, I suppose most of us also found the social side very entertaining and memorable.

Michael attended some of the most important and prestigious medical schools in Germany and Austria. His postgraduate training was done at the Free University in Berlin under MZB. He went on to further his investigation in the late 1980s at the Scripps Research Institute at La Jolla, USA, where he worked with Kevin Sullivan, Eric Johnson and Eng Tan. On his return, he went to Mainz and since 1991 he has been at the Medical School in Hannover, where he is now the Director of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Endocrinology. He is also the chairman of the Center for Internal Medicine.

He started his investigative work in collaboration with MZB focusing on the immunological disorders of the liver, particularly autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) and pri-

mary biliary cirrhosis (PBC). In the beginning, two of his most important papers were published in *Hepatology* and *The Lancet*. In 1982 the publishing of the first radioimmunoassay for a PBC specific antimitochondrial antibody was an important piece of published work in what was to become a highly competitive field of research. The second work published in *The Lancet* in 1987 described the soluble liver antibody (SLA). He went on to concentrate on AIH detailing the mechanisms and treatment of this disease. The most important papers of this period were published in *The Journal of Clinical Investigation* and in *The Lancet* discussing the cloning of cytochrome P450 2D6 as the major LKM 1 antigen and UGT family 1 as the LKM-3 autoantigen in hepatitis Delta and AIH.

In 2001 he had other very important papers published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*; the most important of which discussed the treatment of acute hepatitis C with a course of interferon alpha monotherapy for 24 weeks which showed a 98% sustained response. He was involved in the first pivotal phase III trial of the combination treatment of pegylated interferon alpha and ribavirin for the treatment of chronic hep C. This publication in 2001 in *The Lancet* discussed the results of this trial which is still taken to be the standard care for patients with chronic hepatitis C. This paper and the one co-authored with Elmar Jaeckel became two of the most cited papers in biomedical sciences. Michael also founded Hep-Net, the German National Network of Excellence on Viral Hepatitis.

His research has also led him into the field of liver transplantation and the study of the replicating hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection after liver transplantation. He has been very prolific in his scientific production having published over 500 papers throughout his career.

From my personal perspective I believe one of the most important contributions he has made to the scien-

tific field has been as one of the primary authors of the meeting report produced by the International Association for the Study of the Liver (IASL) which developed a new classification of chronic hepatitis. When I was president of the IASL, myself and the Scientific Committee decided that a group should be formed to develop a new classification of chronic hepatitis, Michael was one of its members, led by Valeer Desmet, and was integral to the final paper which was published in *Hepatology* in 1994 which became the most cited paper in *Hepatology* for the whole decade.

At this point, we should mention that his department at the Hannover Medical School is an institution of true excellence as it has trained various people who have gone on to become leaders of other famous institutions; Barbara Rehermann who now leads Liver Immunology at the NIH, Christian Trautwein who is the Chair of Medicine, at the University of Aachen, Lenhard Rudolph, Chair of Molecular Medicine at the University of Ulm, Hans Tillmann, as Head of Hepatology at the University of Leipzig and finally Stephan Bischoff, Chair of the Institute of Nutrition and Preventative Medicine in Stuttgart.

Throughout his career Michael has received many awards and accolades, one of the most important being the International Hans Popper Award. It is my pleasure to add to this list of accolades by presenting him with this award from EASL in recognition of his important scientific contribution to the field of hepatology.

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