Christopher M. Counter, Ph.D.  
*John J. Abel Award*

Christopher M. Counter, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology at Duke University, is the recipient of the 2006 John J. Abel Award, sponsored by Eli Lilly. Dr. Counter receives the John J. Abel Award as an outstanding young investigator for his contributions that have helped shape the field of pharmacology.

Dr. Counter and colleagues’ work, the “Role of Telomere Length and Telomerase Activity in Cell Immortalization and Tumourigenesis,” is a landmark paper that showed human cells acquire the ability to keep dividing indefinitely by overcoming telomere shortening via activation of the telomerase enzyme. This paper has been cited over 1000 times. Dr. Counter’s work on the role of telomerase in initiating cancer as well as his discovery of the RapGEF pathway involvement in tumorigenesis provided the groundwork for a completely novel pharmacologic approach to not only treating, but preventing cancer. Dr. Counter has expanded his studies of the relationship of telomerase to cancer to include clinical applications.

Dr. Counter completed his doctoral degree at McMaster University in Canada under the mentorship of Silvai Bacchetti and Calvin Harley. He began his research career as a Research Associate with Robert Weinberg at The Whitehead Institute of MIT. In 1998, Dr. Counter moved to Duke University.

John C. Lee, Ph.D.  
*Pharmacia-ASPET Award in Experimental Therapeutics*

John C. Lee, Ph.D., of GlaxoSmithKline is the recipient of the 2006 Pharmacia-ASPET Award for Experimental Therapeutics. The Pharmacia-ASPET Award for Experimental Therapeutics is given annually to recognize and stimulate outstanding research in pharmacology and experimental therapeutics—basic laboratory or clinical research that has had, or potentially will have, a major impact on the pharmacological treatment of disease. This award is funded by an endowment from Pharmacia (now Pfizer) and by ASPET.

The research conducted by Dr. Lee and his colleagues led to the discovery of p38MAP Kinase and illustrated its critical role in inflammation signaling and in inflammatory diseases. His discovery of this kinase target and of selective p38MAP Kinase inhibitors and their pharmacology has led to their potential use in the treatment of several important diseases. The work has led to a broader appreciation of this kinase cascade in a variety of biologic processes and has fueled discovery and development projects throughout the pharmaceutical industry. Because of his research, nearly all major pharmaceutical companies have initiated projects around p38 inhibitors and there are now several promising candidate compounds in clinical trials.

After earning a Ph.D. in virology and immunology from the University of Miami School of Medicine, Dr. Lee completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. In 1975, he joined the National Cancer Institute at Frederick, Maryland, where he began his investigations in cytokine research. Dr. Lee moved to GlaxoSmithKline in 1982 where he is now site director, Department of High Throughput Biology.
Frank J. Gonzalez, Ph.D.

Bernard B. Brodie Award in Drug Metabolism

Dr. Frank Gonzalez, Chief of the Laboratory of Metabolism at the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, is the recipient of the 2006 Bernard B. Brodie Award based on his tremendous impact on the field of drug metabolism. The Brodie Award recognizes Dr. Gonzalez’s outstanding contributions to our understanding of human drug metabolism and to future research in the field.

Beginning with his initial efforts to clone rodent and human P450 cDNAs and to characterize the functions of the expressed, recombinant enzymes, Dr. Gonzalez has sought to define the enzymatic properties, polymorphic expression and mechanisms of conditional regulation underlying inter-individual variation in human drug metabolism. These studies laid a foundation for the current use of expressed recombinant human drug metabolizing enzymes by the FDA and the pharmaceutical industry to identify the contributions of individual enzymes to drug metabolism. The work of Dr. Gonzalez and his colleagues also led to the characterization of allelic variants of several P450s including CYP2D6, CYP2A6 and CYP2C9 that contribute to inter-individual differences in drug metabolism. His laboratory has led the effort to develop mouse models for the study of drug metabolism. Gene knockouts in mice for both specific P450 enzymes and transcription factors that regulate P450 expression were generated. In vivo models for human drug metabolism, produced using human genomic clones as transgenes, have been of value to study mechanisms governing the tissue-specific and regulated expression of human P450s as well as to predict human drug metabolism and toxicity. These genetically engineered mice provide integrated biological models to study the potential physiological roles of P450s and their regulation. The knockout and humanized mouse models developed by Dr. Gonzalez are also widely used for research in areas that include toxicology, carcinogenesis and the regulation of lipid homeostasis.

Dr. Gonzalez will give the B. B. Brodie Lecture, entitled “Acetaminophen Metabolism and Hepatotoxicity: 35 Years Since B. B. Brodie” on Monday April 3, from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm in Room 307 of the Moscone Convention Center.

Anthony R. Means, Ph.D.

Goodman and Gilman Award in Receptor Pharmacology

Dr. Anthony R. Means, Nanaline H. Duke Professor and Chairman of the Department of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology at Duke University Medical Center, is recipient of the 2006 ASPET/GlaxoSmithKline Goodman and Gilman Award.

Dr. Means’ research at Duke focuses on the study of cell signals that regulate cell proliferation, differentiation or function, and how altering these pathways contributes to the onset of cancer. He hopes that improving the understanding of these pathways will provide clues that may be used to develop new drugs to combat the disease. He is the author of over 350 scholarly publications.

He earned his undergraduate and master’s degrees from Oklahoma State University and his Ph.D. in Endocrinology from the University of Texas. Dr. Means completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Melbourne in Australia. He then held faculty positions at Vanderbilt University and Baylor College of Medicine before joining the Duke faculty in 1991, where he has served as Chair of the Department of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology for 15 years.
Leonard Cook, Ph.D.

P. B. Dews Award in Behavioral Pharmacology

Dr. Leonard Cook, retired from the DuPont Merck Pharmaceutical Company, is the winner of the 2006 P.B. Dews Lifetime Achievement Award in Behavioral Pharmacology. The award is given every other year and honors the fundamental contributions of P.B. Dews to behavioral pharmacology.

Dr. Cook is internationally recognized as one of the foremost pioneers in behavioral pharmacology. He has contributed substantially to the discovery and evaluation of psychotherapeutics and to the career development of behavioral pharmacologists, who in their turn, have been leaders in the field.

Dr. Cook has established drug behavioral interactions that are presently taught as classical principles in this field.

Dr. Cook earned his Ph.D. from Yale University School of Medicine and subsequently joined Smith Kline & French Laboratories where he played a dominant role in the discovery of the first drugs for schizophrenia as well as in the early development of their Department of Pharmacology. Dr. Cook later joined Hoffmann-LaRoche where he was appointed Director of Pharmacology and led research in the identification of drugs for treating anxiety. In 1983 he joined DuPont de Nemours as director of their CNS research and expanded their CNS research program to focus on Alzheimer's disease therapy. Throughout his career, Dr. Cook has set the standard for CNS drug discovery programs in industry.

Dr. Cook has held academic posts as Adjunct Professor of Pharmacology at Temple Medical School and in psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania. He was also Visiting Professor of Pharmacology at Beijing and Shanghai Medical Schools.

Dr. Cook will deliver the P.B. Dews Lecture, entitled “Reflections on My Career in Psychopharmacology,” on Monday April 3, from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm in Room 303 of the Moscone Convention Center.

Award winners will receive their awards at the ASPET Awards Ceremony on Saturday April 1 at 7:00 pm in Room 2002 of the NEW Moscone WEST Building.

A Reception will follow the Awards Ceremony and is open to all attendees at the meeting.

The ASPET Annual Business Meeting will precede the Awards Ceremony at 6:00 pm in Room 2002.