

Biography

Dr. Harvey Alter

Dr. Harvey Alter earned his medical degree at the University of Rochester Medical School, and trained in internal medicine at Strong Memorial Hospital and at the University Hospitals of Seattle. In 1961, he came to the National Institutes of Health as a clinical associate. He then spent several years with Georgetown University, returning to NIH in 1969 to join the Clinical Center's Department of Transfusion Medicine as a senior investigator becoming Chief of the Clinical Studies and Associate Director of Research in the Department of Transfusion Medicine at the NIH Clinical Center.

Dr. Alter co-discovered the Australia antigen, a key to detecting hepatitis B virus. Later, Dr. Alter spearheaded a project at the Clinical Center that created a storehouse of blood samples used to uncover the causes and reduce the risk of transfusion-associated hepatitis. He was principal investigator on studies that identified non-A, non-B hepatitis, now called hepatitis C. His work was instrumental in providing the scientific basis for instituting blood donor screening programs that have decreased the incidence of transfusion-transmitted hepatitis to near zero.

In 2013, Dr. Alter was honored with the distinguished Canada Gairdner International Award for his critical contribution to the discovery and isolation of the hepatitis C virus, which has led to development of new diagnostic and therapeutic agents and for his key role in reducing the risk of transfusion-transmitted hepatitis.

In 2000, Dr. Alter was awarded the prestigious Albert Lasker Clinical Medical Research Award and in 2002, he became the first Clinical Center scientist elected to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and in that same year was elected to the Institute of Medicine. Only a small number of scientists nationally are elected to both these scientific societies.

Selected Honors and Awards

Recipient Distinguished Achievement Award, American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, 2011; Tibor Greenwalt Memorial Award and Lectureship, American Association of Blood Banks, 2011; Appointed as NIH Distinguished Investigator, 2008; Presidential Award, Society for Advancement of Blood Management, 2006; Recipient of the First International Award for Science, INSERM, Paris France, 2004; American College of Physicians Award for Outstanding Work in Science, 2004; Elected to Mastership in the American College of Physicians, 2003; Elected to National Academy of Sciences, 2002; Distinguished Scientist Award American Liver Foundation, 2002; Presidential Award, International Society of Blood Transfusion, 2002; Elected to the Institute of Medicine, 2002; Albert Lasker Clinical Research Award, 2000; James Blundell Prize, British Blood Transfusion Service, 1994; Karl Landsteiner Award, American Association of Blood Banks, 1992, Elected to the American Association of Physicians, 1992; PHS Distinguished Service Medal, 1977