The ISHR Distinguished Leader Award

The ISHR Distinguished Leader Award is an award of high distinction that is conferred annually to an individual who has made sustained outstanding contributions to accomplishing the mission and advancing the objectives of the ISHR. The selection of the recipient is made solely on the basis of a distinguished and consistent track record of major contributions to the Society, such as leadership roles, activities, and initiatives that have benefited and promoted the ISHR by overcoming problems, developing new programs, and expanding the reach and impact of the Society, at the Section and/or the International levels.

In non-Congress years, the Distinguished Leader Award is presented at the meeting of the Section to which the recipient belongs. The winner receives a $1,000 honorarium and a plaque. An announcement of this Award is published in *Heart News and Views*, and posted in the ISHR website. The winner receives free registration and reimbursement for travel expenses (up to a maximum or $1500 when the recipient delivers the lecture at his/her local Section meeting, and $3,000 when inter-continental travel is required).

Candidates are nominated by current Section Presidents and the President of the International ISHR. The winner is selected by vote of the ISHR-International Council.

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Award Winner
Dr Metin Avkiran
Metin Avkiran has held various research and academic appointments at United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospitals (London) and subsequently King's College London since 1986, including a 10-year Basic Science Lectureship/Senior Lectureship Award from the British Heart Foundation (BHF). He was appointed as Professor of Molecular Cardiology at King's College London in 2001 and served as Deputy Head of the Cardiovascular Division there from 2004 to 2016. In 2016, Professor Avkiran was appointed as Associate Medical Director for Research at the BHF, on secondment from King’s College London. He is a Fellow of the ISHR (FISHR), American Heart Association (FAHA) and European Society of Cardiology (FESC).

Professor Avkiran has contributed to accomplishing the mission and advancing the objectives of the ISHR in a variety of leadership roles over a sustained period, since his election to the European Section Council in 1995. He was elected to the ISHR World Council in 2001 and subsequently as ISHR Secretary General, taking office in that role at the XVIII ISHR World Congress in Brisbane in 2004. Professor Avkiran played a key role in developing and implementing new guidelines for the organisation and financing of subsequent World Congresses, with core support provided by the Society to underpin efforts by local organisers to deliver the highly successful XIX ISHR World Congress in Bologna in 2007 (hosted by Professor Roberto Ferrari) and XX ISHR World Congress in Kyoto in 2010 (hosted by Professor Masatsugu Hori), which both attracted record numbers of participants. Professor Avkiran was subsequently elected as President of the ISHR and served in that capacity from the XXI ISHR World Congress in San Diego in 2013 to the XXII ISHR World Congress in Buenos Aires in 2016, which were hosted by Dr Joan Heller Brown and Professor Martin Vila Petroff, respectively, and further cemented the global status of the ISHR as a dynamic and inclusive organisation for the promotion and dissemination of outstanding progress in cardiovascular research. In addition, Professor Avkiran served as Associate Editor of the ISHR’s official journal, Journal of Molecular and Cellular Cardiology, from 2011 to 2017.

During his various leadership roles through a period spanning over 25 years, Professor Avkiran worked effectively with ISHR colleagues across the world to drive progress in multiple areas. These have included increasing transparency and accountability in the management of the Society’s affairs, enhancing inter-Section liaison and cooperation and establishing initiatives to support the development of early-career investigators, in addition to developing and implementing robust guidelines for the organisation of the triennial ISHR World Congress. His broader leadership contributions in promoting the discovery and dissemination of knowledge in the cardiovascular sciences, the core mission of the ISHR, include his past services as Secretary and Chairman of the British Society for Cardiovascular Research (BSCR) and as Chairman of the Myocardial Biology Panel of the British Cardiac Society (BCS), as well as his work as Associate Medical Director for Research at the BHF, the largest non-commercial funder of cardiovascular research in Europe.

On the research front, Professor Avkiran’s work has focused on the cellular and molecular mechanisms that regulate cardiac function in health and disease, in particular myocardial ischaemia. His laboratory has made major contributions to the understanding of the pathophysiological roles of the cardiac sodium/hydrogen exchanger protein and the therapeutic potential of its pharmacological inhibitors, and the roles of altered cardiac protein phosphorylation driven by hitherto unexplored kinase and phosphatase pathways in regulating key physiological functions, ranging from transcription to contraction, in response to neuro-hormonal stimuli.

While serving as Secretary General for consecutive terms, Professor Avkiran chaired two Scientific Program Committees and worked closely with local organisers to deliver the highly successful XIX ISHR World Congress in Bologna in 2007 (hosted by Professor Roberto Ferrari) and XX ISHR World Congress in Kyoto in 2010 (hosted by Professor Masatsugu Hori), which both attracted record numbers of participants. Professor Avkiran was subsequently elected as President of the ISHR and served in that capacity from the XXI ISHR World Congress in San Diego in 2013 to the XXII ISHR World Congress in Buenos Aires in 2016, which were hosted by Dr Joan Heller Brown and Professor Martin Vila Petroff, respectively, and further cemented the global status of the ISHR as a dynamic and inclusive organisation for the promotion and dissemination of outstanding progress in cardiovascular research. In addition, Professor Avkiran served as Associate Editor of the ISHR’s official journal, Journal of Molecular and Cellular Cardiology, from 2011 to 2017.

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