

EMBO honours leading Italian science communicator

Heidelberg, September 29, 2005

Professor Edoardo Boncinelli of the University Vita-Salute San Raffaele in Milan, Italy is the winner of the 2005 EMBO Award for Communication in the Life Sciences. Boncinelli receives the award in recognition of his outstanding efforts in science communication.

Since 1994, Boncinelli has published 18 science books on topics such as genetics, aging, neurobiology and public health. The full-time professor of biology and genetics –a founding figure in the field of developmental biology of higher animals and humans– is also active in the public arena, regularly communicating with the general public and the media.

The EMBO Award for Communication in the Life Sciences is presented annually to a practising life scientist in Europe who has made a significant contribution to public communication of science. The award highlights the exceptional efforts made by many scientists to combine science communication with a full-time research career.

The international EMBO jury applauded Boncinelli for his unique ability to see the big picture in science. “Boncinelli’s books really tell the whole story. They cover multiple disciplines and combine areas such as philosophy, history and psychology to examine the social impact of scientific advances. He manages to find the perfect balance between hard scientific facts and a social context.”

This skill also comes across in Boncinelli’s interaction with the general public and the media. Not one to shy away from public discourse, he often takes part in public debates and visits local schools. The breadth of his scientific knowledge and natural communication skills also make him a trusted sounding board for the Italian media. A regular contributor to leading Italian daily, *Il Corriere della Sera*, on issues such as cloning, stem cells and GMOs, Boncinelli is also a sought-after source for TV and radio interviews.

On hearing the news of the award, Professor Boncinelli commented:

“Communicating scientific ideas to the public in a neutral way requires huge efforts, but is increasingly necessary. I have dedicated myself to this with great conviction, and am very happy to learn that my efforts are appreciated at a European level - in particular by such a sound and rigorous organisation as EMBO. I hope that more scientists will devote themselves to this activity, which also forces us to analyse, in depth, different issues and their social implications.”

The prize of 5,000 Euro and a handcrafted gold and silver medal will be presented to Professor Boncinelli on October 28, 2005 at the EMBO/EMBL Science & Society Conference, "Science and Security", in Heidelberg, Germany. Winners of the EMBO

Award for Communication are also proposed for the European Commission's Descartes Prize for Science Communication.

This year, as part of the Award for Communication, EMBO presented an additional prize for the best single initiative in science communication. This special discretionary award went to Russian scientist, Dr. Alexander Vershinin, for his outstanding education initiative and innovative book on marine biology, "Life of the Black Sea".

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