



The Ernst W. Bertner Memorial Award

The Ernst W. Bertner Memorial Award is conferred annually on a physician or scientist who has made distinguished contributions to cancer research. It is the oldest award conferred by The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and is presented at the Annual Symposium on Cancer Research.

Established in 1950, the award honors the late Ernst William Bertner, M.D., who was the first acting director of MD Anderson and first president of the Texas Medical Center. The award is made possible by a gift from the former Bertner Foundation, now the Ernst W. Bertner Endowment at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital. It is also sustained by MD Anderson Cancer Center.

The bronze medallion for the award symbolizes the twin goals of cancer research: prevention and cure. The hands of Hygeia emerge from a star to hold a bowl from which the serpent, ancient symbol of medical wisdom, is fed. The goddess Hygeia, daughter of Aesculapius, Greco-Roman god of medicine, represents hygiene and prevention of disease. The star denotes both the State of Texas and the Texan for whom the award is named.

Ernst W. Bertner, M.D.

A gifted organizer and a man of many interests, Dr. Ernst W. Bertner can be credited with much of the early development of MD Anderson Cancer Center and the Texas Medical Center.

A native Texan, Dr. Bertner was born in Colorado City in 1889. He received his medical degree from The University of Texas in 1911 and began medical practice in Houston in 1913. During World War I, he served first with the British army and later with the American forces. He then returned to Houston to resume practice, limiting it to surgery and gynecology.

Dr. Bertner became deeply interested in cancer control because of the increasing number of cancer patients who came to him for treatment. After the Texas Legislature created MD Anderson in 1941 and a site in Houston was selected by the UT System Board of Regents, officials began to search for a director for the new institution. That search was hindered, however, by the wartime demand for physicians. In August 1942, Dr. Bertner agreed to become acting director until a permanent director could be found. He served as the institution's first and only staff member until December 1942.

Through vision and personal efforts, Dr. Bertner kept interest in the new institution alive despite wartime conditions. He appointed the first members of the clinical staff, most of whom served on a volunteer basis. Dr. Bertner himself volunteered his services as a staff gynecologist.

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As acting director, Dr. Bertner was responsible for providing plans for a program, a staff and a budget with the money and the temporary headquarters the institution possessed. He presented the institution's initial budget and organizational plan to the UT System Board of Regents.

In February 1944, Dr. Bertner oversaw the formal opening of then-M. D. Anderson Hospital for Cancer Research at its first quarters—the old Baker Estate near downtown Houston. Dr. Bertner continued to serve as acting director of M. D. Anderson until 1946, when he was elected the first president of the Texas Medical Center, a position he held until 1950.

After assuming his new position, Dr. Bertner continued to be actively interested in MD Anderson and the fight against cancer. He served for several years as chairman of the Committee on Cancer of the Texas Medical Association.

In 1946, Dr. Bertner and his wife, Julia, created the Bertner Foundation to encourage and promote research, study and education related to cancer and other diseases. Announcement of the foundation's sponsorship of the Bertner Award was made in May 1950, two months before Dr. Bertner's death. In memory of Dr. Bertner, the late Jesse H. Jones said, "His untiring efforts on behalf of the Texas Medical Center will never be forgotten as that institution, year after year, promotes the health and happiness of untold thousands."

Ernst W. Bertner Memorial Award Recipients

2022 Tyler Jacks, Ph.D.

2021 Elaine Fuchs, Ph.D.

2020 Angelika Amon, Ph.D.

2019 Dana Pe'er, Ph.D.

2018 C. David Allis, Ph.D.

2017 Craig B. Thompson, M.D.

2016 Carol Prives, Ph.D.

2015 Mina J. Bissell, Ph.D.

2014 John Mattick, A.O., F.A.A. 2013

Andrew Futreal, Ph.D.

2012 Laurie H. Glimcher, M.D.

2011 Yosef Yarden, Ph.D.

2010 Carlo M. Croce, M.D.

2009 Lewis C. Cantley, Ph.D.

2008 Bernhard Ø. Palsson, Ph.D.

2007 Bruce A. J. Ponder, M.D., Ph.D.

2006 Gail Martin, Ph.D.

2005 René Bernards, Ph.D.

2004 Tony Pawson, Ph.D.

2003 Mark M. Davis, Ph.D.

2002 Richard D. Kolodner, Ph.D.

2001 Ralph L. Brinster, V.M.D.,

Ph.D. 2000 Charles J. Sherr, M.D.,

Ph.D. 1999 Robert A. Weinberg,

1998 Arnold J. Levine, Ph.D.

1997 Judah Folkman, M.D.

1996 James E. Darnell Jr., M.D.

1995 Alfred G. Knudson Jr., M.D., Ph.D.

1994 Andrew H. Wyllie, M.B., Ch.B., Ph.D.

1993 Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, Ph.D.

1992 John W. Kappler, Ph.D.

Philippa Marrack, Ph.D.

1991 Philip Leder, M.D.

1990 Donald Metcalf, M.D.

1989 Gertrude B. Elion, M.A.

1988 William J. Rutter, Ph.D.

1987 Frank H. Ruddle, Ph.D.

1986 David Baltimore, Ph.D.

1985 Leroy E. Hood, M.D., Ph.D.

1984 Stanley Cohen, Ph.D.

1983 Isaiah J. Fidler, D.V.M., Ph.D.

1982 Donald D. Brown, M.D.

1981 Takashi Sugimura, M.D.

1980 T. C. Hsu, Ph.D.

1979 Mortimer M. Elkind, Ph.D.

1978 Philippe Shubik, D.Phil., D.M.

1978 Isaac Berenblum, M.D.

1977 Beatrice Mintz, Ph.D.

1976 Howard E. Skipper, Ph.D.

1975 Michael Abercrombie

1974 George H. Hitchings, Ph.D.

1973 George Klein, M.D., D.Sc. (Hon.)

1972 Howard M. Temin, Ph.D.

1971 Elizabeth C. Miller, Ph.D.

James A. Miller, Ph.D.

1969 Boris Ephrussi, D.Sc.

1968 Sol Spiegelman, Ph.D., D.Sc. (Hon.)

1967 Harry Eagle, M.D., M.S. (Hon.), D.Sc.(Hon.)

1966 Alexander Haddow, Ph.D., M.D., D.Sc.

1965 Erwin Chargraff, Ph.D.

1964 Louis Harold Gray, Ph.D., D.Sc., (Hon.)

1963 Ludwick Gross, M.D.

1962 George D. Snell, Sc.D.

1961 Van Rensselaer Potter, Ph.D., D.Sc.

1960 E. V. Cowdry, Ph.D., D.Sc.

1959 Richard E. Shope, M.D.

1958 Jacob Furth, M.D.

1957 John J. Bittner, Ph.D., Sc.D. (Hon.)

1956 Joseph C. Aub, M.D.

1955 George Nicolas Papanicolaou, M.D.

1954 Francis Peyton Rous, M.D.

1953 Charles Benton Huggins, M.D.

1952 George Milton Smith, M.D.

1951 Fred Waldorf Smith, M.D.