

Press Release

June 25, 2015: Presentation of the 2015 Eppendorf Award for Young European Investigator to Thomas Wollert

This year's research prize awarded by Eppendorf goes to Germany

Hamburg, June 2015

In 2015 Eppendorf AG, the Hamburg life science company is presenting its highly prestigious research prize for the 20th time. The independent Eppendorf Award Jury chaired by Prof. Reinhard Jahn selected Dr. Thomas Wollert (Research Group Leader at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry in Martinsried, Germany) as the 2015 winner of the Eppendorf Award for Young European Investigators.

Thomas Wollert, born 1979, receives the € 20,000 prize for his groundbreaking work in reconstituting complex intracellular membrane events in the test tube using artificial membranes and purified components. His experiments have paved the way for understanding key steps in autophagy, a fundamental process required for the clearance of damaged cell parts in all eukaryotic cells. According to the Jury, these discoveries also harbor the potential for refined drug development since malfunction of autophagy is emerging as a critical event in the development of various diseases.

The Award ceremony took place at the EMBL Advanced Training Centre in Heidelberg, Germany, on June 25, 2015. The laudatio honoring Thomas Wollert's achievements was held by the jury chairman Prof. Reinhard Jahn.

In his presentation, Thomas Wollert explained what autophagy is and which approaches he and his group Molecular Membrane and Organelle Biology are using to reveal how cells recycle damaged or superfluous components.

Press Contact:

Bettina Doerler
Barkhausenweg 1
22339 Hamburg, Germany

Phone: +49 40 538 01-640
Fax: +49 40 538 01-662
doerler.b@eppendorf.de

www.eppendorf.com

Thomas Wollert: “The major mission of my laboratory is to reveal the molecular mechanism of autophagy. We produce components of the autophagic recycling machinery and assemble them at model membranes to reveal their function. Our goal is to recapitulate autophagy in the test tube to understand how autophagy operates and what goes wrong in neurodegenerative diseases and cancer.” ... “This prestigious Award honors the hard work of my laboratory and represents a major acknowledgement of our efforts aiming to decipher how cells maintain their homeostasis by autophagy. I am particularly grateful that our unusual bottom-up approach, which is based on biophysics in combination with biochemistry and cell biology, is being recognized by this Award.”

With the Eppendorf Young Investigator Award, which was established in 1995, Eppendorf AG honors outstanding work in biomedical research and supports young scientists in Europe up to the age of 35. The Eppendorf Award is presented in partnership with the scientific journal Nature. The Award winner is selected by an independent committee composed of Prof. Reinhard Jahn (Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, Göttingen, Germany), Prof. Dieter Häussinger (Clinic for Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Infectiology, Düsseldorf, Germany), Prof. Maria Leptin (EMBO, Heidelberg, Germany), and Prof. Martin J. Lohse (Institute for Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Würzburg, Germany).

More information about entry details, judging procedures, and past winners can be found at www.eppendorf.com/award

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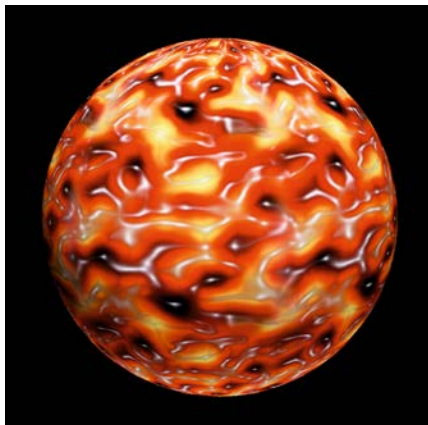
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Photos:



Th_Wollert-EYIA-2015_300dpi_CMYK.jpg (4.2 MB)

Caption: Eppendorf Award Winner 2015: Dr. Thomas Wollert (Research Group Leader Molecular Membrane and Organelle Biology at the Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry in Martinsried, Germany)



Caption: Structure of the autophagic scaffold. The height profile of the scaffold, which has been reconstituted on model membranes *in vitro*, was recorded using atomic force microscopy. Starting at the membrane (black) the scaffold (yellow-red) rises until the ridge of height is reached (white). The two-dimensional map was projected onto a sphere representing the autophagosome. ©Thomas Wollert



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Eppendorf was founded in Hamburg, Germany in 1945 and has about 2,850 employees worldwide. The company has subsidiaries in 25 countries and is represented in all other markets by distributors.

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