

Celebrating 30 years of the Barnett Christie Award

The BIA are celebrating 30 years of the Barnett Christie award. This award celebrates research achievements of infection trainees. Over the next year we will share the stories of the previous winners to inspire future generations of infection researchers.

John Frater

Professor of Infectious Diseases and Honorary Consultant Physician, Oxford University

Winner 2006

HIV and Immune Escape – the cost of viral evolution

In 2006, I was in my final year as a Specialist Registrar in Infectious Diseases and General Medicine at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, and had just been awarded an MRC Clinician Scientist Fellowship at the University of Oxford. The Barnett Christie prize was a great opportunity, and an excellent forum to present and get feedback from a senior and experienced clinical audience.

I transitioned from there to a MRC Senior Fellowship and am currently a Professor of Infectious Diseases in Oxford. My work is still in HIV, but focused more on remission and cure strategies, understanding the HIV reservoir, and new interventions such as broadly neutralising antibodies. To new and aspiring academics, my advice would be that it is a great career with fantastic opportunities to keep learning fascinating things and to contribute to scientific understanding. Be persistent and keep trying even if you get knock-backs – it can be demoralising at times, but keep going – it's worth it and you'll get there in the end!

Sunil Shaunak

Emeritus Professor of Infectious Diseases, Imperial College London

Winner 1991

Mechanisms determining HIV infection of CNS derived cells and the use of PCR to detect early neurological involvement

The first winner of the Barnett Christie prize. He committed his career to the invention of new & cost-effective medicines for the treatment of global infectious diseases. The industrial success of his patents was achieved through Polytherics Ltd (2001) which listed on London's AIM market as Abzena plc (2014). The focus was on AIDS, Hepatitis C, shigella, & antibody-drug conjugates. In 2005, the High Commissioner to India, Sir Michael Arthur, described this effort as a shining example of how exciting innovation in our universities can be rapidly turned into useful new global healthcare products. In 2007, he coined the term "Ethical Pharmaceuticals" in a Guardian front page article and has driven the international public debate since. He urges equitable global access to affordable medicines. He discussed the key issue of how society enables & ensures global access of the tricky combination of new medicines for difficult diseases and their affordability (Making Drugs Today) in a BBC Radio "Four Thought" in October 2014.

See also our video clip on the virtual stand for an update from:

Guy Thwaites

Director of Oxford University Clinical Research Unit, Vietnam

Winner 2004

Tuberculous Meningitis: New Challenges, Old Solutions