Jeffrey Friedman receives the 2016 Harrington Prize for Innovation in Medicine

March 16th, 2016

Jeffrey Friedman, Marilyn M. Simpson Professor and head of the Laboratory of Molecular Genetics, has won the 2016 Harrington Prize for Innovation in Medicine. The award, given by the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the Harrington Discovery Institute, recognizes physician-scientists who have moved science forward with achievements notable for innovation, creativity, and potential for clinical application.

Friedman, who is also a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator, is being honored for his discovery of leptin and the leptin-mediated pathway that controls feeding behavior.

Now in its third year, the Harrington Prize was established by the American Society for Clinical Investigation, a nonprofit honor organization of physician-scientists, and the Harrington Discovery Institute at University Hospitals of Cleveland, an initiative designed to help physician-researchers turn their discoveries into novel therapies. Friedman will receive a $20,000 grant and present a lecture at the 2016 ASCI and Association of American Physicians Joint Meeting on April 15. He will also publish an essay in ASCI’s The Journal of Clinical Investigation.

In a landmark study published in Nature in 1994, Friedman identified a gene in mice and humans called obese that codes for a hormone he named leptin. Friedman and his colleagues showed that leptin acts on sets of neurons in brain centers that regulate food intake and energy expenditure, and has powerful effects on reproduction, metabolism, other endocrine systems, and immune function. Defects in the leptin gene are associated with severe obesity in animals and humans. Friedman’s discovery shed light on the pathogenesis of obesity, suggesting new treatments for the condition.

Recently, Friedman and his colleagues revealed that a hormone called amylin may work with leptin to control food consumption and body weight, uncovering a potential way to treat obesity through combination therapy.

Friedman received his M.D. from Albany Medical College of Union University and came to Rockefeller as a postgraduate fellow and associate physician in 1980. He received his Ph.D. in 1986 and was appointed to the faculty. He serves as codirector of the new Kavli Neural Systems Institute.
at Rockefeller with Cori Bargmann, Torsten N. Wiesel Professor and head of the Lulu and Anthony Wang Laboratory of Neural Circuits and Behavior.

Friedman is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Medicine. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2005 Canada Gairdner Foundation International Award, the 2005 Passano Award, the 2009 Shaw Prize in Life Science and Medicine, and the 2010 Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award.