

University of Birmingham immunologist made Fellow of the Royal Society

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A University of Birmingham emeritus professor and outstanding immunologist is among scientists who have been created Fellows of the Royal Society, it was announced today.

Professor Ian MacLennan, former head of the division of Immunology (now the School of Immunity and Infection) joins 43 other eminent scientists who are newly elected to the distinguished status. The expansion of the universe, genetics, the exploration of Saturn and its moons and the appliance of science are among the fields of expertise of Professor MacLennan's co-Fellows.

According to the Royal Society's commendation, Professor MacLennan has made 'several landmark contributions to immunology and especially to our understanding of antibody production. His classic experiments led him to propose a role for germinal centres in affinity maturation of antibody responses by a process of hypermutation followed by antigen-mediated selection.

'Subsequently, he identified the basis of the multi-step selection process that protects against autoantibody production. He also first discovered marginal zone B cells and identified how they counter encapsulated bacterial infection. His early work revealed and characterised the cells now termed NK cells and their capacity to kill antibody-coated nucleated cells.'

Professor MacLennan was the founding director of the Birmingham University Medical Research Council Centre for Immune Regulation. This centre allows a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the regulation of immune responses that protect from infection but can also cause diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile onset diabetes.

He commented: 'I am delighted to receive this recognition of the work we have done in University of Birmingham Medical School over the last 30 years on the way antibodies that can efficiently protect us from infection are produced in responses to vaccines.'

Professor Lawrence Young, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences, said: 'This is well-deserved recognition for an outstanding scientist and clinician. Apart from Ian's seminal contributions to our understanding of B cell physiology, he has also made a significant impact on the clinical management of multiple myeloma. Ian represents the truly translational scientist – using his understanding of fundamental biological processes to improve patient care.'

Sir Paul Nurse, President of the Royal Society and University of Birmingham alumnus, added: 'Science impacts on most aspects of modern life, improving our understanding of the world and playing an increasing role as we grapple with problems such as feeding a growing global population and keeping an ageing home population healthy. These scientists who have been elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society are among the world's finest. They follow in the footsteps of luminaries such as Newton, Darwin and Einstein and I am delighted to welcome them into our ranks.'

Further information can be found at <http://royalsociety.org/about-us/fellowship/new-fellows-2012> (<https://owa.bham.ac.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=771144b985dc4ff982bb94eb65a2bfa3&URL=http%3a%2f%2froyalsociety.org%2fabout-us%2ffellowship%2fnew-fellows-2012>)

Professor Ian Calman MuirMacLennan CBE

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Notes to editors:

1. The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering, and medicine. The Society's fundamental purpose, as it has been since its foundation in 1660, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

Ends.

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