



THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PHARMACOGNOSY

Discovering nature's molecular potential

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Practice of Pharmacognosy Leads to Three New Nobel Prize Winners

The American Society of Pharmacognosy (ASP), congratulates three scientists whose work in pharmacognosy, the study of natural compounds, led to being awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize this year.

The Society notes that the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine winners Drs. William C. Campbell, Satoshi Ōmura and Youyou Tu were honored for the discovery of novel natural products that became impactful therapies for infections by roundworm parasites and malaria.

Dr. Ōmura is member of the American Society of Pharmacognosy and one of 33 Fellows of the Society, selected for their contributions to pharmacognosy. Dr Ōmura is also a past recipient of the ASP Norman R. Farnsworth Research Achievement Award (2013) for his work on the discovery of novel bacterial strains and their bioactive constituents such as *Streptomyces avermitilis*, which produced the anti-filarial drug Avermectin. He continues to publish significant research papers on novel compounds from *Streptomyces* species in the *Journal of Natural Products*, the flagship publication of the ASP.

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Dr. Ōmura was honored by the Nobel committee jointly with Dr. Campbell, previously at the Merck Institute for Therapeutic Research, where he showed that Avermectin was active against the roundworm parasites. Avermectin and its analog Ivermectin, created by Dr.

Campbell and colleagues, are now the standard of care for these infections in both humans and animals and have dramatically reduced the human suffering from river blindness and elephantitis. Due to the effects of Avermectin and its analogs, these diseases are on the verge of eradication.

Dr. Tu has been honored for her discovery of the antimalarial compound artemisinin, which she isolated from the plant *Artemisia annua* (Asteraceae). *Artemisia annua*, also known as sweet wormwood or *qīnghāo*, is a plant that had been used in traditional Chinese herbal medicines, for fevers from infection. Artemisinin proved a spectacularly effective drug against malaria by rapidly killing *Plasmodium* parasites at an early stage in their development. Artemisinin, is part of current combination therapy for malaria that has been reported to reduce the mortality from this parasite by 20-30%, saving hundreds of thousands of lives per year.

All three researchers in pharmacognosy have made outstanding contributions to humanity and the American Society of Pharmacognosy is proud to add to the chorus congratulating them on their well-deserved honor from the Nobel committee.

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The American Society of Pharmacognosy (ASP) is the premier scientific organization of natural product researchers in the United States, with over 600 members engaged in a broad range of natural products research.

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For more information on the American Society of Pharmacognosy and natural products research see: <http://www.pharmacognosy.us/>

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