For Immediate Release

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Sixth Sankyo Takamine Memorial Award Announced

Tokyo, July 10, 2008 – The Sankyo Foundation of Life Science Chairman Yasuhiro Ikegami announced today that the Sixth Sankyo Takamine Memorial Award for fiscal 2008 is to be awarded to Shinya Yamanaka M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Center for iPS Cell Research and Application, iCeMS, Kyoto University.

The Sankyo Takamine Memorial Award was established in November 2003 as part of the Foundation's 20th anniversary and in memory of the research work of Dr. Jokichi Takamine, who was the first president (March 1913-July 1922) of Sankyo Co., Ltd., a former subsidiary of DAIICHI SANKYO COMPANY, LIMITED.

Since November 1983, the Sankyo Foundation of Life Science has provided support for innovative research in the life sciences, including two-year research grants, facilitating exchange programs in which foreign academics are invited to Japan while Japanese researchers work overseas, the sponsorship of international symposia, and the establishment of two-year Sankyo fellowships.

Winning research theme - Induction and maintenance of pluripotent stem cells

After graduating from Kobe University's School of Medicine in 1987 and completing the doctorate program of the Graduate School of Medicine at Osaka City University, Shinya Yamanaka moved to San Francisco to study at the Gladstone Institute of Cardiovascular Disease as a postdoctorate fellow. Using genetically-modified mice, he discovered a gene which plays an essential role in the pluripotency of embryonic stem cells. Dr. Yamanaka then began to devote his research to the field of ES cells. In 2006, he succeeded in generating pluripotent stem cells with high proliferation and differentiating ability similar to ES cells by combining four genes from the skin cells of mice. He named the new cells "induced pluripotent stem cells" (iPS cells). Initially, there was concern about the safety of the iPS cells, which contained four genes including oncogenes but in 2007 he was able to successfully generate oncogene-isolated iPS cells with three genes.

This research will benefit in understanding disease origin and developing new medicines. In the future, it can be applied to the field of regenerative medicine, in which patients' own cells will be able to be used to regenerate organs and other body parts.

Dr. Yamanaka's profile

Current position:

Professor and Director of Center for iPS Cell Research and Application, iCeMS of Kyoto University

Educational and professional history

March 1987	Graduated Kobe University Graduate School of Medicine
March 1993	Awarded Ph.D. at Osaka City University Graduate School
April 1993-	Gladstone Institute, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of California San Francisco, Research Fellow
October 1996	Appointed Assistant Professor, Osaka City University Graduate School of Medicine
December 1999	Appointed Associate Professor, Nara Institute of Science and Technology
September 2003	Appointed Professor, Nara Institute of Science and Technology
October 2004	Appointed Professor, Institute for Frontier Medical Sciences, Kyoto University

October 2007	Appointed Professor, Institute for Integrated Cell-Material Sciences, Kyoto University
January 2008	Appointed Director of Center for iPS Cell Research and Application, iCeMS, Kyoto University