

2000 Pioneer in NeuroVirology: Volker ter Meulen, MD



Prof. Volker ter Meulen (right), recipient of the 2000 Pioneer in NeuroVirology award, and Mrs. ter Meulen (left) at this year's ISNV banquet held at the San Francisco Maritime Museum.

The International Society for NeuroVirology has announced Volker ter Meulen as the recipient of the Second Annual Pioneer in NeuroVirology Award. The award was presented to Dr ter Meulen at the Third International Symposium on NeuroVirology held in September 2000.

Dr ter Meulen's contributions to the field of neurovirology span a period of more than 30 years in which his research has been directed toward the study of virus persistence in the CNS. His studies have focused on viruses in either animal models or human diseases such as measles virus, coronavirus, and more recently, simian immunodeficiency virus. Specifically, his work has targeted acute measles encephalitis, measles inclusion body encephalitis, and subacute sclerosing panencephalitis. His seminal findings have greatly contributed to our current understanding of virus persistence and pathogenesis in the CNS. In addition, his work has been instrumental in determining the etiology of other neurological syndromes associated with viral infections. His studies on measles virus infection in the CNS have

led to our understanding of the mechanism of persistent viral infection, in particular, the manner in which viruses are able to escape the immune response. To pursue the mechanisms of neuropathogenesis of viruses, Dr ter Meulen developed an animal model to examine human samples. Prior to the development of advanced molecular biology and immunological techniques, Dr ter Meulen studied viral homology, gene expression, and mutations. Through his studies he was able to demonstrate how measles and coronavirus infection are able to induce MCH class one and two expression and initiate an autoimmune response. One of the important implications of these findings was the notion that viral infections are able to trigger autoimmune responses. More recently, Dr ter Meulen has expanded his studies to include work on retroviruses, particularly HIV-1 and SIV.

Dr ter Meulen received his MD from the University of Göttingen in 1960. Following an internship at the University of Göttingen, he completed a fellowship in Virology at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia under the direction of Dr Werner Henle. He then returned to Germany to complete a residency in Pediatrics at the Universitäts-Kinderklinik in Göttingen. Dr ter Meulen returned to the US as visiting scientist at the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia where he worked on measles neuropathogenesis. In 1968, Dr ter Meulen accepted the position of Assistant Professor in the Departments of Pediatrics and Microbiology at the University of Göttingen. He quickly rose through academic ranks attaining the title of Professor and Chairman of the Institute of Virology and Immunobiology at the University of Würzburg in 1975. From 1983 to 1985 he served as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Würzburg. Since 1993 Dr ter Meulen has been the Chairman of the Research Centre for Infectious Diseases at the University of Würzburg.

Dr ter Meulen remains an active and important researcher in neurovirology. He has published more than 400 papers in leading international journals and has received numerous awards and honors including the prestigious Max Planck Research Prize. He continues to make numerous contributions to the scientific community through his service on various committees throughout Europe and the world, including the World Health Organization. Dr ter Meulen has been very generous with his time and knowledge through training postdoctoral fellows and students. He is a committed and dedicated researcher whose contributions have made a palpable impact on the development and understanding of neurovirology.

Kamel Khalili, PhD
Editor-in-Chief