The 2008 Scientific Achievement Award recipient: Andrew S. Wechsler, MD

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The American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS) presented its Scientific Achievement Award, one of the most prestigious honors of the AATS, to Dr Andrew Stephen Wechsler of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the 88th Annual Meeting in San Diego, California. Dr Wechsler is an internationally recognized academic cardiovascular surgeon, a cardiovascular researcher, a scholar, a gifted and dedicated teacher and mentor, and an international medical statesman.

Dr Wechsler was born in New York City and educated at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. He early on established a keen interest in laboratory research, and as an undergraduate he was a laboratory instructor in biology and awarded a National Science Foundation research fellowship at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Berkeley, California. Dr Wechsler was an intern and assistant resident in medicine at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital at Harvard Medical School from 1964 to 1966, after which he joined the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as a clinical associate from 1966 to 1968, where he worked in the cardiology branch under Dr Eugene Braunwald.

These were heady and exciting times at the NIH, and it was there that Dr Wechsler's interest in cardiac physiology blossomed and he decided to become a cardiovascular surgeon. After Dr Wechsler left the NIH, he went to Duke University to train in surgery under Dr David Sabiston, the 65th President of the AATS. After 6 years of residency training in surgery, Dr Wechsler became an NIH scholar and a teaching scholar in academic cardiothoracic surgery at Duke, the Chief of the Cardiac Surgical Service of the Durham Virginia, and eventually Professor of General and Thoracic Surgery and an Assistant Professor of Physiology at Duke University Medical Center.

During his time at Duke, Dr Wechsler ran one of the most productive laboratories in cardiovascular research in the entire world. His early studies on coronary circulation physiology, the role of collateral vessels during coronary bypass, and the impact of revascularization on ventricular perfor-

mance were seminal. His subsequent extension of these studies to understanding the problem of global myocardial ischemia, reperfusion, and particularly the role of ventricular hypertrophy and ischemia reperfusion injury were seminal. His studies carried him to physiologic, pathologic, and biochemical studies of the fundamentals of the improvement of myocardial protection, particularly in the hypertrophied ventricle. Numerous current leaders in the field of cardiothoracic surgery were trainees in Dr Wechsler's laboratory at Duke. He finished his years at Duke with some important articles in the late 1980s on the role of ischemic reperfusion of the right ventricle; his work on myocardial protection and the understanding of left ventricular function before and after ischemic arrest was instrumental in the improvement of results in this era worldwide.

In 1988, he assumed the position of Chairman of the Department of Surgery and Professor of Physiology at Medical College of Virginia. Despite his increasing academic and clinical responsibilities, he was able to carry out more important experiments in his laboratory on ischemia reperfusion of the myocardium. At this time, he also became intrigued with the thought that genotypic changes in cells after ischemia/reperfusion might be the consequence of genotypic changes that affected short- and long-term recovery from myocardial ischemia reperfusion injury. Dr Wechsler's laboratories were funded by external competitive research grants from 1986 to 2009.

From 1998 to 2003, Dr Wechsler was the Chairman of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Hahnemann University in Philadelphia, which then melded with Drexel University, where he assumed the position of the Stanley Brockman Professor and Chairman of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery from 2003 to the present. In addition to this academic, clinical, and research activity, he served as Editor of *The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* from 2000 to 2007. The *Journal* flourished under his leadership due in no small part to his thoughtful and fair approach, and its scientific impact increased; he also ushered the *Journal* into the electronic world using Elsevier's Editorial Manager and HighWire Press' BenchPress systems. He has also served as the President of the Cardiac Surgery Biology Club and Treasurer of the AATS, and has been on numerous boards and councils of medical and surgical organizations devoted to cardiovascular surgery.

Dr Wechsler continues to be an important academic leader in cardiovascular surgery; he just assumed the role of Chief Executive Director of CTSNet, an electronic vehicle of

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utmost importance to cardiothoracic surgery around the world. Dr Wechsler also represents the AATS and the cardiovascular surgical research community as the Senior Advisor to the Division of Cardiovascular Sciences of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Throughout his career, he has focused on basic science research to improve outcomes of clinical cardiac surgery and, along this path, has

mentored hundreds of laboratory and clinical fellows who themselves have become experts in cardiac basic science and clinical cardiac surgery. It was with a great deal of pride that the American Association for Thoracic Surgery awarded the Scientific Achievement Award of the AATS in 2008 to Andrew S. Wechsler, MD, an honor well deserved for a lifetime dedicated to our field.