



## Nubia Muñoz, long-time IARC staff member, gets Charles Rodolphe Brupbacher Prize for Cancer Research

Every other year, the [Charles Rodolphe Brupbacher Foundation](#) bestows the [Charles Rodolphe Brupbacher Prize for Cancer Research](#) upon scientists who have made extraordinary contributions to basic oncological research. In 2007, the laureates were Lloyd J. Old, Robert D. Schreiber and Mark J. Smyth, for their contributions to cancer research in the field of immunology.

This year, the prestigious Prize goes to two well-known scientists in the field of cancer research whose work has had strong implications for public health: Dr Nubia Muñoz, of Colombia, for her contributions to the epidemiology of cancer causation by chronic infections, in particular the etiology of cervical cancer, and Sir Richard Peto, Professor of Medical Statistics & Epidemiology at the University of Oxford, for his contributions to cancer epidemiology, in particular the establishment of the causation of premature death by tobacco smoking.

Dr Nubia Muñoz, a long-time staff member of the International Agency for Research on Cancer, received her M.D. from the Faculty of Medicine of Cali, Colombia, in 1964. After a fellowship at the US National Cancer Institute (NCI), she started her IARC career as a trainee in the Unit of Epidemiology in 1969, and then went on to a post of staff scientist, working with Dr Calum Muir and Dr Nick Day. She continued her career at IARC where she led the Field and Intervention Studies Unit. She retired from the Agency in 2000, and now continues her research career as Emeritus professor at the NCI of Colombia and as a Consultant for the Catalan Institute of Oncology in Barcelona (Spain).



At IARC, she led a major international programme of research, using modern lab techniques and showed that HPV infection by certain HPV types is one of the strongest cancer risk factors ever found. Subsequent work produced precise estimates of relative risks that permitted defining the HPV genotypes that had to be targeted for prevention.

By 1999, it was possible to say that chronic HPV infection should be considered as a necessary cause of cervix cancer. HPVs were then evaluated in one of the IARC Monographs, and in 1995, HPVs 16 and 18 were classified as "[carcinogenic to humans](#)" (Group 1).

This Monograph was an important stimulus to the development of HPV tests whose aim is to improve traditional cervical cancer screening modalities, which relied until then on Pap tests. This Monograph also gave a boost to pharmaceutical companies that invested huge efforts into developing potential HPV vaccines.

The Prize ceremony takes place within the framework of a Scientific Symposium, also supported by the Foundation, which includes the Charles Rodolphe Brupbacher Public Lecture. Dr Muñoz' keynote presentation is entitled *From causality to prevention: The case of cervical cancer*.

Dr Christopher Wild, Director, IARC, will chair one of the sessions of this important event entitled *Targets for Cancer Prevention and Therapy*, focusing on *Cancer Causes and Prevention*. He will introduce presentations by Dr Nubia Muñoz, and by Dr Maxwell Parkin, another long-serving IARC staff scientist, as well as one by Curtis C. Harris, from the NCI.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer is particularly proud to see one of its Chief scientists distinguished for her distinct contribution to international cancer research by the Charles Rodolphe Brupbacher Foundation. Her role in making large preventive interventions possible, particularly in cervical cancer prevention, is widely recognised as a

marvelous example of applied research making a difference in low- and medium-resource countries.

Dr Wild takes this opportunity to also salute and congratulate Richard Peto, a long-time collaborator of IARC, on this achievement and for the role he has played in tobacco control, and as recently as 2007, for his contribution to an IARC publication on the reversal of risk after quitting smoking.

See the 2009 Announcement at <http://www.brupbacher-stiftung.ch/pdf/Announcement09.pdf>

World Health Organization  
International Agency for Research on Cancer

Organisation mondiale de la Santé  
Centre international de Recherche sur le Cancer

150, cours Albert-Thomas 69372 Lyon Cedex 08 (France)  
Telephone: 33 472 738 485 Facsimile: 33 472 738 311 <http://www.iarc.fr>