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Thijn Brummelkamp receives the EMBO Gold Medal 2013

In recognition of his pioneering work to identify genes involved in human disease

HEIDELBERG, 8 May 2013 – EMBO today announced *Thijn Brummelkamp* of the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI) in Amsterdam as the winner of the 2013 EMBO Gold Medal. The award acknowledges his outstanding work to accelerate the genetic analysis of human disease.



In 2002, Brummelkamp developed an inexpensive method to permanently inactivate large numbers of genes by the use of RNA interference. This breakthrough involved the development of a new short hairpin RNA vector system (pSUPER) that directs the synthesis of small interfering RNAs in mammalian cells. The method is used today in many laboratories throughout the world and allows researchers to collect detailed information on the function and roles of the many human genes involved in diseases like cancer. The paper by Brummelkamp and colleagues in *Science* that describes the method has been cited more than 3500 times according to Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge.

Brummelkamp and his research group also investigate how viruses and bacteria make their way into mammalian cells. The development of haploid genetic screens in Brummelkamp's laboratory has permitted the identification of some of the proteins required for the entry of pathogens into mammalian cells. This method was recently used to demonstrate that the entry of the Ebola virus into human cells requires a protein involved in the transport of cholesterol. This type of work helps to identify new drug targets and is opening up novel approaches and strategies for the treatment of different viral and bacterial diseases.

"I am delighted and honoured to receive such a prestigious award and extremely grateful that I have been able to work with many fantastic scientists in stimulating environments over the years," the prizewinner said upon hearing the news.

"Thijn Brummelkamp belongs to a rare breed of scientists that can influence a field of research not once but repeatedly," commented Anton Berns, former director of research at the NKI. "He is expected to make many additional landmark contributions to molecular biology in the years to come," stated EMBO Member Piet Borst from the NKI in his nomination letter.

In 2005, Brummelkamp was selected as one of the top innovators under the age of 35 in the United States by MIT Technology Review magazine. The achievements of the 37-year-old scientist have been

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recognized by several awards (see *Career stages*).

Thijn Brummelkamp will receive the EMBO Gold Medal and an award of 10,000 Euros on 22 September 2013 at *The EMBO Meeting* in Amsterdam where he will also give a lecture about his research.

Career stages

Thijn Brummelkamp received his PhD (cum laude) from Utrecht University in 2003 for his work at the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI). He did not pursue formal postdoctoral training but immediately accepted a position to establish his own research programme as a Whitehead Fellow at the prestigious Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, Massachusetts, Cambridge, United States. In 2011, he moved his laboratory to the NKI. He also holds an appointment as Adjunct Principal Investigator with the CeMM Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Thijn Brummelkamp received the Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Award in 2003, the 2004 NVBMB Award from the Dutch Association for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and the Kimmel Scholar Award in 2006.

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