Obituary Notice

Max Lab: 1938–2016

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Professor Max Lab on 28 January 2016. Max worked at both Imperial College and the MRC Clinical Sciences Centre during his career, beginning as a Lecturer in the Department of Physiology, Charing Cross Hospital Medical School in 1969, and becoming Professor in 1994.

He was active as a part-time Senior Research Investigator in the NHLI at Hammersmith until a few weeks before the time of his death. He was world-famous for discovering the phenomenon of mechano-electric feedback in the heart, and spent his scientific career studying its underlying basis. His research elucidated both its physiological role in co-ordinating cardiac contraction as well as how it contributed to pathological disturbances of rhythm.

Max supported many young scientists who are now themselves eminent. For example, he championed Professors Yuri Korchev (Medicine) and Julia Gorelik (National Heart and Lung Institute, NHLI) in developing their novel Scanning Ion Conductance Microscope, and it was fitting that his final paper using this technology in a new way for mechanical stimulus of live single cardiomyocytes was published in Cell Reports on 5 January this year.

Prof Peter Kohl, who holds the Chair in Cardiac Biophysics and Systems Biology at NHLI, was one of Max’s trainees, and is currently setting up the new Research Centre for Cardiovascular Medicine at the University of Freiburg. Max used his semi-retirement to take advantage of all the wealth of events at Imperial. Many of you will have observed his penetrating questioning at seminars, and may also have visited the exhibition of his sculptures at the SALC in South Kensington. He will be very much missed here and across the world.

A Symposium in Honour of Professor Max Lab will be held on Thursday 26 May, from 14:00 – 18:00, at Wolfson Education Centre, Lecture Theatre 2, Imperial College Hammersmith Campus for colleagues, friends and family to showcase his scientific and personal legacy (contact sian.harding@imperial.ac.uk for details).