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THE OTSUKA WHATS & WHOS

Otsuka
people creating
new products
for better health
worldwide

Okochi Memorial Prize Awarded to Aripiprazole



(left to right) Youichi Taniguchi, Director, Bulk Pharmaceutical Chemicals Department, Second Tokushima Factory, Yasuo Oshiro, Ph.D., Corporate Advisor, Intellectual Property Department, Seiji Sato, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, First institute of New Drug Discovery, Medicinal Chemistry Group, Hisayuki Tsujimori, Ph.D., Manager, Bulk Pharmaceutical Chemicals Department, Second Tokushima Factory, Satoshi Aoki, Associate Manager, Bulk Pharmaceutical Chemicals Department, Second Tokushima Factory

The awards ceremony for the 60th annual Okochi Prize (awarded by the Okochi Memorial Foundation) was held on March 26 at the Industrial Club of Japan. The highest honor, the Okochi Memorial Prize was awarded to the Otsuka researchers for the development of aripiprazole, a drug for the treatment of schizophrenia.



Corporate Advisor Yasuo Oshiro accepting the Okochi Memorial Grand Prize

The Otsuka recipients received the highest honor, the Okochi Memorial Prize, for the development of aripiprazole. At the awards ceremony, Corporate Advisor Yasuo Oshiro, on behalf all of the recipients, thanked the Foundation for the award, and stated the recipients' determination to contribute to society, as expressed by Otsuka Pharmaceutical's corporate motto "Otsuka—people creating new products for better health worldwide."

What is Okochi Prize?

The Okochi Memorial Foundation was established in 1954 in honor of Dr. Masatoshi Okochi, who was the third president of the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research and who held that position from 1917 to 1946, for his contributions to academia and industry. The Foundation began awarding prizes for the purpose of “promoting the use of science and technology for practical applications.”

The Okochi Prizes are awarded to individuals, groups of individuals, or companies to recognize their contributions to Japan’s industrial technology. Each year, one Okochi Memorial Production Prize and five Okochi Memorial Technology Prizes are awarded. And recipients are selected following careful review by a review board consisting of 20 individuals, including university professors, and by the board of directors of the Okochi Memorial Foundation.

Aripiprazole has been approved in more than 70 countries around the world, and is the only third-generation drug recognized for the treatment of schizophrenia, having a novel structure that is not possessed by conventional drugs, which have a carbostyryl skeleton.

Aripiprazole acts as a partial D2 receptor agonist to stabilize neurotransmission and improve both the positive and the negative symptoms of schizophrenia, and is also characterized by fewer adverse reactions.

The Okochi Memorial Prize was awarded based not only on the results that have been achieved in the field of life sciences, but also on the achievements that have been attained in the field of production technology, such as the Japan Institute of Invention and Innovation Imperial Invention Prize received in 2012.

Aripiprazole is manufactured using a cost-effective manufacturing method that allows a large quantity of high-purity product to be manufactured and a process in which a water-based solvent with little environmental impact is used. Bulk manufacture has achieved zero emission status. A method allowing the stable manufacture of specific anhydride crystals, which had previously been difficult, was achieved through the inventiveness and creativity of manufacturing personnel. The establishment of a robust manufacturing process in the Production Department has enabled stable supply of drug substance on a commercial scale.

Many of the people working in the Manufacturing Department who contributed greatly to aripiprazole’s success attended the awards ceremony and were recognized for their achievement.

