

Nobel medicine prize opens 2016 awards season

October 3 2016



Credit: Wikipedia

The 2016 Nobel prize season kicks off Monday with the announcement of the medicine prize by a scandal-tainted jury, to be followed over the next 10 days by the other science awards and those for peace and literature.

The medicine prize winners will be announced as of 11:30 am (0930 GMT). As always, predicting the names of the winners is a game of chance, especially given the number of researchers worthy of the honour.

Swedish public radio SR said possible winners this year could include US scientists Gregg Semenza, William Kaelin and Peter Ratcliffe for their discovery of the molecular mechanisms by which human and animal cells sense and respond to low or inadequate oxygen levels, referred to as hypoxia.

The trio won the Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award last month for their pioneering work.

Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter meanwhile cited immunologist James Allison and neurologist Karl Deisseroth, both also of the US, as other potential laureates.

The Karolinska Institute which awards the prestigious medicine prize has however seen its reputation tarnished over a scandal involving Italian surgeon Paolo Macchiarini.

In 2011, while working as a visiting professor at Karolinska, Macchiarini soared to fame for inserting the first synthetic trachea, or windpipe,

using patients' stem cells.

His work was initially hailed as a game-changer for transplant medicine. But two patients died and a third was left severely ill.

Allegations ensued that the risky procedure had been carried out on at least one individual who had not, at the time, been critically ill, and in 2014 several surgeons at Karolinska filed a complaint alleging that Macchiarini had downplayed the risks of the procedure.

Karolinska suspended all synthetic trachea transplants shortly after.

Two members of the Nobel medicine prize assembly were forced to step down in September over the scandal.

"Many said that the Karolinska Institute was very closely linked to the Nobel medicine prize and that after a scandal like this they would not be able to evaluate research with equanimity, and so they should take a timeout... But that didn't happen," SR science reporter Ulrika Bjorksten said.

Peace in Colombia, Iran nuclear deal

The Nobel physics prize is to be awarded on Tuesday and the chemistry prize on Wednesday.

For the physics prize, the discovery of gravitational waves has been mentioned as a potential winner, a major research breakthrough that confirms one of Albert Einstein's predictions in his theory of general relativity. The first observation of gravitational waves was made in February 2016.

Dagens Nyheter meanwhile speculated the chemistry honours could go

to classic research in the field, tipping researchers who added new elements to the periodic table, such as nihonium or moscovium.

On Friday, eyes will turn to Oslo where perhaps the most prestigious of the prizes, that for peace, will be announced.

The Norwegian jury has sifted through an avalanche of nominations this year—a record 376, almost a hundred more than the previous record from 2014.

Among those cited often are the orchestrators of two historic accords: the recent peace deal in Colombia between the government and the leftist FARC rebels; and the Iranian nuclear deal.

In a shock upset however, Colombians rejected the peace deal by a razor-thin majority in a referendum on Sunday.

Also mentioned are Syria's civil organisation of emergency responders known as the White Helmets, and Greek islanders who have come to the aid of desperate migrants.

US fugitive whistleblower Edward Snowden, who revealed the extent of the NSA's surveillance programmes, has meanwhile been nominated for the third straight year.

The economics prize will be announced on Monday, October 10, and the literature prize will wrap things up on October 13, a week later than usual.

Stockholm's literary circles are abuzz with a plethora of names of possible laureates, some more likely than others.

The Swedish Academy, which awards that prize, could tap superstar

novelists such as Philip Roth of the US or Haruki Murakami of Japan, or some lesser known writers such as Norwegian playwright Jon Fosse or Syrian poet Adonis.

© 2016 AFP

Citation: Nobel medicine prize opens 2016 awards season (2016, October 3) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-nobel-medicine-prize-awards-season.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.