

# Kariko calls Nobel win 'unbelievable'

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Katalin Kariko, speaks after receiving, together with six other scientists, the Princess of Asturias Award for Technical & Scientific Research 2021 from Spain's Princess of Asturias Leonor, at a ceremony in Oviedo, northern Spain, Friday Oct. 22, 2021. The Nobel Prize in medicine awarded to Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman for enabling development of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines , it was announced on Monday, Oct. 2, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Manu Fernandez, File

Katalin Kariko, [who won the Nobel Medicine Prize](#) for work on messenger RNA (mRNA) technology, paving the way for COVID-19 vaccines, told Swedish media on Monday winning felt "unbelievable".

Kariko, 68, told Swedish Radio that even though she had received recognition in recent years, she had struggled for a long time.

Her mother had faith, however, and would always listen to the Nobel Prize announcements.

"She listened when I was not even a professor, like 10 years ago," Kariko told the broadcaster.

"She always listened, saying: 'Maybe your name will be said'," the Hungarian researcher recalled.

"I was just laughing because I never get a grant and never had a team. I was not even a professor because I was demoted. So I just left it. I said, 'No way'," Kariko explained

She added that her mother had now passed away and might be "listening from above".

Thomas Perlmann, secretary-general of the Nobel Assembly, also noted that Kariko had remained committed even when her research was met with skepticism.

"She struggled and didn't get recognition for the importance of her vision," Perlmann told a press conference, at which he announced that Kariko and Drew Weissman of the United States were the winners of this year's Nobel Medicine Prize.

"This is an extraordinary and unusual scientist... who was very passionate

about this idea of mRNA and using it therapeutically," Perlmann said.

Fellow winner Weissmann, 64, also said he found it hard to believe he had won the [prestigious award](#).

"I heard it from Katie first because they called her first and didn't have my number," he told Swedish Radio.

"We weren't sure if somebody was playing a prank on us," Weissman said, adding he was not a big celebrator but would probably go out with his family for a "nice dinner".

The pair will receive their Nobel prize from King Carl XVI Gustaf at a formal ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, the anniversary of the death in 1896 of scientist Alfred Nobel who created the prizes in his last will and testament.

The [prize](#) consists of a diploma, a [gold medal](#) and a check for \$1.0 million.

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