

Introduction

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Jose Sahel graduated from Paris University Medical School, and performed his residency in Ophthalmology in Paris and Strasbourg. In addition, he pursued a research fellowship at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Harvard Medical School and a visiting scholarship at Harvard Biological laboratories.

He is currently Director of The Vision Institute, an UPMC/Inserm/CNRS Research Centre in Paris, France, Professor of Ophthalmology at Pierre and Marie Curie University Medical School, and the Cumberlege Professor of Biomedical Sciences at the Institute of Ophthalmology, University College London. He chairs a department of Ophthalmology at the Quinze-Vingts National Ophthalmology Hospital and at the Rothschild Ophthalmology Foundation, and coordinates the Ophthalmology Clinical Investigation Centre and the National Reference Centre for Retinal Dystrophies.

Prior to his appointment in Paris, Jose Sahel was a Visiting Lecturer at Harvard Medical School, Visiting Professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and Professor of Ophthalmology at Louis Pasteur University, Strasbourg, where he directed also the Eye Pathology laboratory.

In 1992, Jose Sahel founded the Laboratory of Retinal Cellular and Molecular Pathophysiology as a site for translational research on the mechanisms of retinal cell degeneration. This lab, at the core of the present Vision Institute with 200 co-workers, has, among several achievements, developed innovative therapies for protecting retinal photoreceptors, and identified a key mechanism and family of proteins involved in the maintenance of cone-mediated central and light-adapted vision.

Besides research on developmental biology, functional genomics, physiology and therapeutics (e.g., stem cells, gene therapy, pharmacology, and artificial retina), the development of high-resolution in-vivo cellular imaging, relevant biomarkers and disease models is conducted in an environment in close collaboration with industrial partnerships.

Jose is member or chair of several scientific boards (Inserm, University, Foundation Fighting Blindness, Paris City, Alcon Research Institute, and others) and he also advises several biotech and larger companies. He cofounded Fovea Pharmaceuticals in 2005, which has become the Ophthalmology Division of Sanofi Aventis. He has received several awards for his team's achievements and, since 2008, he is an Honorary Member of the D.O.G., Knight of the Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur, Member of the Academy of Sciences, Institut de France, Human Biology and Medical Sciences section, Member of Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis, and holds a doctorate Honoris Causa of the University of Geneva, Switzerland.

In addition to these professional and scientific achievements, we all know Jose's sense of humor, huge knowledge, and kindness. It is therefore my immense pleasure that we present this year's Gonin Lecture to Jose Sahel, a very special person, scientist, and clinician.

Yannick LeMer,
President Club Jules Gonin