

German scientist, inventor of world's 1st treatment for hepatitis D, chosen for Blumberg Prize by Hepatitis B Foundation

Prof. Stephan Urban led development of the first treatment for hepatitis D, an often-fatal infection for millions of people worldwide.

DOYLESTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES, November 15, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Hepatitis B Foundation](#), a global nonprofit organization, today announced that Stephan Urban, PhD, distinguished professor and globally recognized virologist, has been chosen to receive its 2023 Baruch S. Blumberg Prize.

Dr. Urban developed bulevirtide (brand name Hepcludex), the first drug approved to treat [hepatitis D](#), which is a serious coinfection that only exists in combination with hepatitis B.

Developed by Dr. Urban and his team at Heidelberg University Hospital, bulevirtide blocks the entry of the hepatitis B and hepatitis D viruses into the liver cell. Hepcludex, the first commercial formulation of bulevirtide, was approved by the European Commission in July 2020.



Prof. Stephan Urban

Studies have estimated that 12 to 74 million people carrying the hepatitis B virus have been coinfecting with hepatitis D virus (HDV) worldwide. Chronic HDV infection results in often fatal complications and a higher risk of liver cancer.

"Dr. Urban's innovative research has helped us understand key components of hepatitis B and D virology, and he is a pioneer in the development of new therapeutics for hepatitis B and D," Hepatitis B Foundation President Chari A. Cohen, DrPH, MPH, said. "The hepatitis B and D



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*Hepatitis B Foundation
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The Baruch S. Blumberg Prize is the Hepatitis B Foundation's highest honor. It is named for Baruch S. Blumberg, MD, DPhil, who received the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology in 1976 for discovering the hepatitis B virus. He was a faculty member at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia at the time. Dr. Blumberg was instrumental in the creation of the Foundation, served on our Scientific and Medical Advisory Board and was the Foundation's Distinguished Scholar from 1992 until his death in 2011. The Foundation's research arm was renamed the Baruch S. [Blumberg Institute](#) in his honor.

A committee of former Blumberg Prize recipients annually selects a new honoree. Past recipients include Dr. Harvey Alter, who was among the winners of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology; Dr. Anna Lok, assistant dean for clinical research, University of Michigan Medical School; and Dr. John Taylor, professor emeritus, Fox Chase Cancer Center.

The Blumberg Prize will be presented to Dr. Urban at the 2023 Hepatitis B Foundation Gala, which will be held on March 10 at The Warrington in Warrington, Pa.

Timothy M. Block, PhD, co-founder of the Hepatitis B Foundation and a virologist who is one of the world's leading experts on hepatitis B, said: "Prof. Urban is one of the world's most innovative and creative scientists, taking an idea for a drug from concept all the way to practice, where it's now being used to treat people. Honoring this kind of accomplishment is exactly what we intended for the Blumberg Prize."

Prof. Urban is head of Translational Virology in the Department of Infectious Diseases, Molecular Virology, at Heidelberg University Hospital. He also is Project Coordinator for the DZIF (German Center for Infection research) TTU Hepatitis Program. Prof. Urban was awarded with the DZIF Research Award in 2014, received the Pettenkofer Prize in 2011, the distinguished award in Hepatitis B Virus research in 2021 and the Wolfgang Gerok prize in 2022.

Prof. Urban's research interests include molecular mechanisms of hepatitis B and hepatitis D virus/host interactions with a focus on the early and late events of viral infection; identification of hepadnaviral receptors and structural analyses of virus receptor interactions; development of novel cell culture systems for HBV and HDV; clinical development of entry inhibitors for HBV and HDV infection; and analyses of innate immune responses upon HBV and HDV infection.

Prof. Urban completed his Diploma in Biochemistry at the University of Tübingen in 1991 and

was awarded a doctorate in 1995 under Prof. P.H. Hofschneider at the Max-Planck-Institut für Biochemie, Martinsried. He conducted postdoctoral research at the Centre for Molecular Biology, Heidelberg University, with Prof. H. Schaller and became an independent group leader in the department of molecular virology headed by Prof. Ralf Bartenschlager.

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