

## 1 **Nobel prize not immune to death**

2 original at

3 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2011/10/2011-nobel-prize-medicine>

4 One of the fixed points in the scientific calendar is the announcement, in  
5 early October, of the Nobel prizes for chemistry, physics and medicine.  
6 Scientists who hope to receive the prize hover discreetly near the  
7 telephone and wait for a call from Stockholm. Tradition dictates that the  
8 prize for medicine is announced first, and this year it went to three  
9 immunologists.

10 Two, Bruce Beutler, from America, and Jules Hoffmann, from Luxembourg,  
11 shared half the prize (5m crowns, or about \$730,000) for related work on  
12 the way the immune system responds to invading pathogens. Dr Hoffman  
13 found a crucial protein-binding mechanism in fruit flies. This mechanism  
14 helps the immune system recognise invaders and trigger an immune  
15 response against them. Dr Beutler subsequently discovered the same  
16 mechanism in mice.

17 The other 5m crowns went to Ralph Steinman, from Canada, who  
18 discovered the role of dendritic cells in activating some of the immune  
19 system's main defence cells. Or, rather, it would have gone, had Dr  
20 Steinman not died on September 30th. The posthumous announcement of  
21 a Nobel prize is not supposed to happen, because the rules dictate that it  
22 can only be awarded to living scientists.

23 The announcement of Dr Steinman's award made no mention of his death.  
24 Later on, the Karolinska Institute issued the following statement:  
25 "According to the statutes of the Nobel Foundation, work produced by a  
26 person since deceased shall not be given an award. However, the statutes  
27 specify that if a person has been awarded a prize and has died before  
28 receiving it, the prize may be presented.

29 The decision to award the Nobel Prize to Ralph Steinman was made in  
30 good faith, based on the assumption that the Nobel Laureate was alive.  
31 The decision made by the Nobel Assembly at Karolinska Institute thus  
32 remains unchanged."

## Questions

- 1) Why do, according to the article, some scientists wait for a call from Stockholm around this time of the year?
- 2) Why is the prize for medicine awarded first from among the Nobel prizes?
- 3) How many people received this year's Nobel prize for medicine?
- 4) Was the prize money supposed to be evenly distributed between all of this year's laureates?
- 5) What did Mr Beutler and Dr Hoffman receive the Nobel prize for?
- 6) Why was the award of the Nobel prize to Dr Steinman somewhat controversial?
- 7) What arguments did the Karolinska Institute use to justify its choice of Dr Steinman?
- 8) Do you think that prizes and money collected in grants are a good way of distinguishing good science from bad?

## Vocabulary

**hover** (line 6) – to keep lingering about; wait near at hand.

**respond** (line 12) – to act in reply; react

**trigger** (line 14) – to initiate, start or precipitate (a chain of events, scientific reaction, psychological process, etc.).

**posthumous** (line 20) – arising, occurring, or continuing after one's death.

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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