

Speaker profile

Sir John Skehel, FRS will be speaking at the ISMB Symposium. The title of his talk will be 'Of H1 and N1'.

John Skehel is Director of MRC National Institute for Medical Research and Head of Infections and Immunity Group. He was educated at Wales and Manchester. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences, a Member of EMBO and Academia Europaea.

As one of the worlds leading virologists, Sir John Skehel has enjoyed a spectacular career. He has been a leader in virology for decades, and as a result has been presented with many of the disciplines highest accolades. Sir John has made profound contributions to our understanding of influenza virus, his most famous work being on the virus haemagglutinin (HA). His observation that a low pH triggers a conformational change in HA, and that this leads to the fusion of the influenza virus envelope with the endosomal membrane of cells was seminal for the field of virus entry into cells and for membrane fusion in general.

Sir John Skehel, who has worked on the influenza virus for the last 30 years, led the team that first deciphered the molecular detail of how the flu virus latches on to and infects a cell, and how it stays one step ahead of the immune system.

Most recently, he led a team of MRC scientists in mapping the structure of the strain of influenza responsible for the 1918 pandemic, which globally killed more than 20 million people. Researchers hope that knowledge of the structure will provide valuable clues in determining whether new variants of the virus have killer potential.

In 2004 he was awarded Imperial College's Ernst Chain Prize, which honours a career scientist who has made an original and substantive contribution in any field of science that has furthered, or is likely to further, understanding or management of human disease. His prize lecture was entitled 'The Mechanism of

Influenza Virus Infection'. Rector of Imperial College, Sir Richard Sykes commented: 'As global monitoring centres remain on high alert, watching to see if bird flu will again 'jump' to humans, and evolve so it can be transmitted between people, the achievements of this year's Ernst Chain Prize winner are a timely reminder of how far we have come in combating this deadly disease.'

Sir John Skehel's dedicated and brilliant effort during the past three decades has not only unlocked some of the secrets of flu, but helped pioneer many structural biology techniques to help fellow researchers decipher how cells function.'

John Skehel is one of many exciting speakers at the ISMB Symposium. Details of how to register for this free event are below.

About the ISMB Symposium

The 2nd ISMB symposium '*At the interface of Structural Biology, Chemical Biology, Bioinformatics, Biophysics and Proteomics*' will be held on Monday 19 and Tuesday 20 June this year. An exciting programme is planned.

Details of how to register for the ISMB Symposium are available at:

www.ismb.lon.ac.uk/symposium2006.html

There is no charge to attend the ISMB Symposium but *places are limited*.



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