

The EACR Cancer Researcher Award 2010 Kevin Ryan

The European Association for Cancer Research confers the EACR Cancer Researcher Award in recognition of an outstanding contribution in the field of fundamental research in cancer. This award is presented on an annual basis to a member of the Association with no more than 15 years post doctoral experience.



On the occasion of EACR-21 the award will be presented to Kevin Ryan

Kevin Ryan started his research career at The Beatson Institute for Cancer Research, Glasgow UK, where he worked as a graduate student studying the role of Myc, Max and Mad in processes of myeloid differentiation. After obtaining his PhD in 1996, he moved to the US National Cancer Institute in Frederick, Maryland to undertake post-doctoral studies with Karen Vousden. It was there that his interest in cell death in cancer began while working on cell death pathways downstream of p53. During this time, he provided evidence of the importance of cell death to p53-mediated tumour suppression and made the important link between p53 and NF- κ B in the control of tumour cell death. In 2002, Prof. Ryan was awarded a Cancer Research UK Senior Fellowship to aid the establishment of his own research team back at The Beatson Institute focused on identification and characterisation of factors controlling tumour cell death

Since establishing the Tumour Cell Death Laboratory at the Beatson Institute, Prof. Ryan's team has made a number of important discoveries relating to the regulation of cell death in tumour development and cancer therapy. Most notable amongst these discoveries was the discovery of DRAM1, the first p53 target gene to be described which regulates autophagy. Autophagy is a catabolic membrane trafficking process which, like apoptosis, is an evolutionarily conserved, genetically defined process that regulates cell viability. Different to apoptosis, however, autophagy appears to have context specific roles in cell death regulation and evidence exists too that autophagy can be both oncogenic and tumour suppressive. In addition, autophagy has multiple roles in protecting us against other pathological states including neurodegeneration, infection, inflammation and diabetes. More recent studies in the Ryan lab, which form the central theme of this award lecture, have been focused on understanding where and how autophagy may contribute to tumour development and how tumour-associated autophagy may be selectively targeted for cancer therapy, without effect on beneficial forms of autophagy in normal tissues.

Prof. Ryan has published 45 scientific manuscripts in leading international journals and has received a number of awards for his research. In 2009, Prof. Ryan was elected a Fellow of The Society of Biology.