For information:
Robin B. Goldsmith
(619) 554-8134

For immediate release
# 110393

Dr. Richard Lerner Receives Prestigious Humboldt Award

La Jolla, CA. November 3, 1993 — Richard A. Lerner, M.D., President of The Scripps Research Institute, has been named a recipient of the prestigious Humboldt Research Award for Senior U.S. Scientists. The award, granted in recognition of significant past scientific accomplishments in research and training, is sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Bonn, Germany. In addition, it is intended to promote long-term specialized cooperation between American and German researchers and their respective institutions.

The award honors Lerner’s internationally recognized contributions to biomedical research. He is regarded as one the first scientists to demonstrate that peptides -- short chains of amino acids -- could be used to elicit antibodies against intact protein molecules, and to suggest that this technology could be turned to the production of synthetic, peptide-based vaccines. This work, in turn, led to the discovery that the regions of proteins that are most antigenic share certain physical and three-dimensional properties.

Lerner also pioneered the methodology of commandeering the mammalian immune system to manufacture antibodies that perform the chemical functions of enzyme catalysts. Moreover, in the course of preparing increasing numbers of new catalytic antibodies, he and his colleagues developed a means by which to screen for and detect monoclonal antibodies several thousand times more efficiently than by using conventional techniques.

MORE
Lerner graduated from Northwestern University and Stanford University Medical School where he studied chemistry as well as medicine. He served an internship at Palo Alto Stanford Hospital and received postdoctoral training at Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation in experimental pathology. Following a staff appointment at the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia, he joined the Research Institute of Scripps Clinic in 1970 and became Chairman of its Department of Molecular Biology in 1982. In 1987 he was appointed President of The Scripps Research Institute.

Under Lerner’s leadership, The Scripps Research Institute has become one of the world’s most advanced centers for research in structural biology and the analysis of the three-dimensional structure of proteins and other macromolecules.

A member of the National Academy of Sciences, Lerner has served as Consultant to a Special Virus Cancer Program, NCI; as ad hoc Member of the Molecular Biology Study Section; on the Fellowship Screening Committee of the California Division, ACS; and as a Member of the Organization Committee for Modern Approaches to Vaccines, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories.

Lerner was the recipient of the Parke Davis Award in 1978, John A. Muntz Memorial Prize in 1990; San Marino Prize in 1990; The Burroughs Wellcome Fund and the FASEB Wellcome Visiting Professor Award in 1990; Honorary Doctorate from the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden, in 1990; The College De France Lectureship in 1991; Arthur C. Cope Scholar Award in 1991; The Tenth Annual Jeanette Piperno Biomedical Research Award in 1992; and the Sixteenth Annual CIBA-GEIGY Drew Award in Biomedical Research in 1992.
Lerner holds memberships in the American Society of Experimental Pathology, American Society of Microbiology, New York Academy of Sciences, Biophysical Society and the Pluto Society.

He serves on the editorial boards of The Journal of Virology, Molecular Biology and Medicine, Vaccine, In Vivo, Peptide Research, Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters, Drug Targeting and Delivery, and PNAS.

In 1985, Lerner was elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences; Member of the National Academy of Science USA in 1991; Member of the Scientific Policy Advisory Committee, Uppsala University, Sweden in 1991; Member of the Scientific Advisory Board, Economic Development Board, Singapore, in 1991; and Trustee, The Neurosciences Research Foundation, 1992.

He has authored more than 250 scientific publications as well as several book chapters and a number of abstracts.

###