

University of Haifa

The Senate of the University of Haifa, by virtue of the authority vested in it by the constitution of the University and in accordance with the recommendations of the President and the Executive Committee

hereby confers upon

Irun Cohen

the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, Honoris Causa

In recognition of his leadership and excellence in research and for standing at the forefront of research in Israel and around the world; for his unique and outstanding contribution to our understanding of the control mechanisms of the immune system, mainly in the field of autoimmune diseases; for his development of an innovative theory that serves as a platform for early clinical diagnosis and patient monitoring; for his extraordinary abilities to translate complex laboratory methods and theories into medical applications, books and publications accessible to the public; and for his contribution to strengthening medical education in Israel.

Conferred on 22 Sivan 5778/June 5, 2018
Haifa, Israel




Mooly Eden

Chairman of the Executive Committee



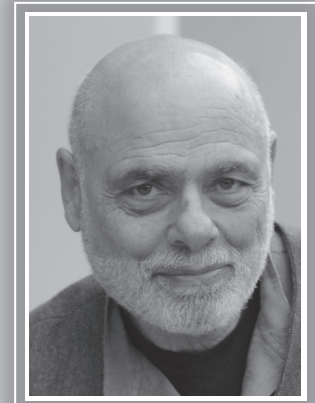
Prof. Ron Robin

President



Prof. Gustavo Mesch

Rector



PROFESSOR IRUN COHEN

Irun R. Cohen, one of the most distinguished immunologists in Israel, was born in Chicago in 1937. He completed his medical studies at Northwestern University School of Medicine and specialized in pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland. He came on Aliya in 1968 and joined the Weizmann Institute of Science as an immunology researcher, eventually going on to serve as a Professor of Immunology (today Professor of Immunology, Emeritus).

Alongside his groundbreaking research activity, Prof. Cohen held a number of senior public positions in Israel and abroad. Among others, he served as a member of the founding team of the School of Medicine at Ben-Gurion University, Chairman of the Council of Education's National Committee for Ongoing Evaluation and Re-Accreditation of Medical Schools in Israel, Mauerberger Professor of Immunology at the Weizmann Institute, Director of the Robert Koch-Minerva Center for Research in Autoimmune Diseases, Director of the European Collaboration on T Cell Vaccination and Director of the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev.

Prof. Cohen stands at the forefront of medical research in Israel and worldwide, and his research has made a significant contribution to understanding the control mechanisms of the immune system, primarily in the field of autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, rheumatism and lupus. Prof. Cohen's laboratory is a pioneering force in all aspects of laboratory work methods dealing with isolating, refining and the functioning of T cells – methods now practiced in many parts of the world. Prof. Cohen and his team isolated the T cells that cause autoimmune diseases, weakened them and then re-introduced them as a vaccine into the patient's body. The treatment has been successfully performed on patients in the United States, Israel, Europe and China. Prof. Cohen's groundbreaking research achievements led to the establishment – under his scientific consultancy – of several start-up companies working on a range of research studies and the development of various medical devices to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of several diseases, including Crohn's Disease, lupus and ALS.

Prof. Cohen also contributed to the development of an innovative theory related to monitoring the immune system in the body and the body's ability to rid itself of abnormal cells whether they are defective, dead or malignant. The theory is based on the assumption that the immune system has an 'image' of the body in a healthy state – similar to the body image found in the central nervous system – a theory which Cohen named the Immunological Homunculus. This theory has made a significant impact on the way in which immunologists interpret the normal and physiological functioning of the immune system and is today used as a platform for early clinical diagnosis and patient monitoring. Prof. Cohen has been exceptionally successful in translating basic laboratory methods and theories into many medical applications.

Prof. Cohen, who has published more than 550 articles and review articles, and many books, is among the most cited researchers worldwide. The more than 28,000 citations of his research attest to his tireless productivity and his creative approach to major modern-day immunology problems.

For his inspirational achievements, Prof. Cohen has received many awards, the most important of which are the Robert Koch Award of the Federal Republic of Germany (1989), the Ludwig Elkeless Prize for Distinguished Medical Research (1991), the Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Research (1991), the RAD BioMed Competition Prize (2005), the AESKU Prize (2006), the Teva Founders' Prize (2008), and Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa) from the University of Hamburg in Germany.

Prof. Cohen is married to Yael and they have three children and 10 grandchildren.