

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sir Mark Walport



Sir Mark Walport, physician-scientist, academic leader, and visionary health research planner, named recipient of the 2020 Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research.

Toronto – June 1, 2020 – Professor Sir Mark Walport, FRS, FMed Sci, FRCP, is Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which brings together the 7 research councils, Innovate UK and Research England with a budget of more than £7 billion (~ \$12B CAD). He is a champion of fundamental science in health research, engineering, technology and innovation.

Sir Mark obtained his clinical and PhD degrees at Cambridge University. His scientific interests were in the molecular and genetic basis of inflammatory diseases of the joint and he trained clinically as a Rheumatologist. Prior to entering government, Sir Mark was Professor of Medicine and Chair of the Division of Medicine at Imperial College, London, Hammersmith Hospital.

Through his affiliation with the Wellcome Trust (2000-2013), Sir Mark Walport made major contributions first as Governor and then for 10 years, as Director. He supported some of the most important initiatives in UK biomedicine and saw the completion of sequencing of the Human Genome at the Sanger Centre and championed some of the world's first policies on Open Access Science. During this time, the Wellcome Trust became the most influential independent funder of medical research in UK, and amongst the most influential globally in biomedical research policy. Much of this was due to Sir Mark's visionary leadership and perseverance.

In 2013, he was appointed the UK government's Chief Scientific Advisor and Head of the government's Office for Science. In this role, he provided advice to government at the highest level on a range of crucial scientific topics across all scientific domains. This clearly illustrated Mark's profile and deep understanding of the science agenda, not only in the Life Sciences, but also in important areas such as climate change, digital infrastructure and agriculture.

Throughout his career Sir Mark has been a vocal supporter for the need to take a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to tackling the major problems facing society. In 2016, Sir Paul Nurse was asked by government to examine how the UK funding environment might be re-shaped by examining the funding to each of the research councils in relation to their ability to work across disciplines. The idea emerged of an entity called, "UK Research and Innovation" and in 2018, Sir Mark became the first Chief Executive of this bold new concept.

Throughout his career, Sir Mark has also been an ardent supporter of the arts and a popular TV personality, as spokesperson for science and innovation. Sir Mark has been the recipient of many honours and prizes, including ten Honorary Degrees and a Knighthood in 2009.

The Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research, established in 2005 by the **Friends of Canadian Institutes of Health Research (FCIHR)**, recognizes exceptional innovation by a visionary health leader of international stature. The \$35,000 Friesen Prize is awarded annually. Sir Mark Walport will deliver public talks this fall and in 2021 in conjunction with the Friesen Prize Program. For further information on Friends of CIHR and the Friesen International Prize, please visit: www.fcibr.ca or contact: Cristina S. Castellvi. Tel. #: (416) 506-1597. Email: fcibr@fcibr.ca