

Edinburgh Medal awarded to Professor Carl Djerassi

✘ Professor Carl Djerassi, an American chemist, novelist and playwright and Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at Stanford University has been awarded the 23rd Edinburgh Medal today. Djerassi is best known for his contribution to the development of the first oral contraceptive pill in 1951, for which he won the National medal of Science in the USA.

Dr Simon Gage, director of the Edinburgh International Science Festival, said:

“The Pill is based on chemical research carried out by Carl Djerassi. It is primarily for this game-changing social innovation born out of good science that he is being awarded the Edinburgh Medal. Beyond this significant achievement, we recognise that he has committed many years of his life to the exploration of the concepts and issues of science through plays and writings. He has constantly sought ways to engage the public in debate and discussion about issues that matter to them.”

Professor Djerassi said:

“As a frequent past visitor to Edinburgh, I am delighted and honoured to receive this year’s Edinburgh Medal and to note that I am the first chemist among my distinguished predecessors.”

The Edinburgh Medal is a prestigious award given every year to men and women of science and technology whose professional achievements are judged to have made a significant contribution to the understanding and wellbeing of humanity. The Medal is supported by the City of Edinburgh Council and will be awarded in a ceremony at the City Chambers on Tuesday 12 April 2011.

The Rt Hon George Grubb, Lord Lieutenant and Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, said:

“Professor Carl Djerassi’s pioneering research work in reproductive medicine was instrumental in bringing about one of the most significant scientific and indeed social advances of the twentieth century. His tireless dedication to the cause of engaging the public with science is truly inspirational, and it is a tremendous honour to present Professor Djerassi with the Edinburgh Medal for 2011.”

The Medal Oration will be given by Professor Philippa Saunders, Inaugural Director of the MRC Centre for Reproductive Health in Edinburgh. This will be followed by the Edinburgh Medal Address: [Science, Sex and Theatre: A Potent Brew](#), by Professor Djerassi where he will discuss – in part through two theatrical illustrations – the two scientific inventions that have led to the current divorce of sex and reproduction: the Pill and IVF, leading respectively to sex without reproductive consequences and reproduction without sexual intercourse.

The Vote of Thanks will be given by Dana Linnet, Principal Officer of the United States Consulate in Edinburgh. Tickets for the event are available online from www.sciencefestival.co.uk or by calling the Box Office on **0131 553 0322**.

The first Edinburgh Medalist in 1989 was the theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize winner Abdus Salam. Of the subsequent nineteen medalists, three have subsequently been awarded a Nobel Prize.

Photo courtesy of Edinburgh International Science Festival