

Nobel winners pay tribute to deceased laureate

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2011 Nobel medicine prize laureates Jules A. Hoffmann, left, Luxembourg-born Frenchman, and U.S. Bruce A. Beutler, right, during their press conference at the Nobel Forum in Stockholm, Sweden, Tuesday Dec. 6, 2011. Hoffmann is research director and member of the board of administrators of the National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS) in Strasbourg, France. Beutler works for The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, CA, USA, and University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, Dallas, TX, USA. They share the prize with Ralph M. Steinman who recently died. The Nobel Prize ceremonies will take place on upcoming Saturday. (AP photo/Scanpix Sweden/Jonas Ekstromer) SWEDEN OUT

(AP) -- Two scientists who will collect this year's Nobel Prize in medicine praised late co-winner Ralph Steinman on Tuesday, saying he probably knew he was in line for the prestigious award.

American Bruce Beutler and French scientist Jules Hoffmann shared the 2011 award with Canadian-born Steinman for discoveries about the body's disease-fighting immune system.

Nobel officials made an exception to their rule against posthumous awards because the committee wasn't aware when it announced the winners on Oct. 3 that Steinman had died of cancer three days earlier, at age 68.

"I'd like to think that Ralph somehow did know he was destined to get the prize this year," Beutler told reporters in Stockholm, where the Nobel Prize ceremony will be held on Saturday. "I'm sure he would have been enormously happy, but somehow I think he knew about it, that it was coming anyway."

Beutler said that Steinman's family, who will travel to Stockholm to pick up his half of the 10 million kronor (\$1.5 million) prize, "should take solace in the fact that he's really (immortal) in the pantheon of scientists."

Hoffmann, who also knew Steinman well, agreed, saying "Ralph somehow knew that we was certainly close to being elected."

Steinman discovered so-called dendritic cells in 1973. Beutler and Hoffmann were cited for their discoveries in the 1990s of [receptor proteins](#) that can recognize bacteria and other [microorganisms](#) as they enter the body, and activate the first line of defense in the [immune system](#), known as innate immunity.

Asked what it takes to become a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, Hoffmann said you need to be courageous, hardworking and "find a theme that has potential without being the one which everybody is looking at."

Patience is also a key in science, he said. "It's like joining a religion, like becoming a monk."

Beutler said his formula for success was to get "a very broad education in science, and second of all really love science."

Days of lectures and interviews await the two scientists and the winners in chemistry, physics, literature and economics before collect their awards at a prize ceremony in Stockholm's Concert Hall on Saturday. The Nobel Peace Prize will be handed out in Oslo, Norway, on the same day.

The Nobel Prizes were created by Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel and are always presented on the anniversary of his death in 1896.

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