

Editorial

The Texas Heart Institute and Ray C. Fish Award for Scientific Achievement in Cardiovascular Diseases



Ray C. Fish (1902-1962) was a leading figure in Houston's natural gas industry and a philanthropist. He believed in the American dream of "opportunity for success." The Ray C. Fish Foundation was established so that others might be encouraged to broaden man's self-knowledge and to keep the American dream alive. After its founder's death from heart disease, the Fish Foundation granted \$5 million (equivalent to \$37 million today) to make The Texas Heart Institute a reality. For this reason, the Institute's highest professional award is given in honor of this extraordinary man. The award recognizes those whose innovations have made substantial contributions to cardiovascular medicine and surgery.

The Texas Heart Institute Medal and Ray C. Fish Award for Scientific Achievement in Cardiovascular Diseases were first presented in 1972 to Dr Norman Shumway. Since 1972, 42 other highly deserving recipients have been so honored by the Institute. The complete Roll of Recipients appears on the next page.

Hartzell V. Schaff, MD

The recipient of the 2025 Ray C. Fish Award is Dr Hartzell V. Schaff, who is recognized for his extensive research and clinical contributions as a cardiovascular surgeon in congenital and acquired cardiovascular disease. Dr Schaff is the Stuart W. Harrington Professor of Surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, as well as a consultant for the clinic's Department of Cardiovascular Surgery. He is also a faculty member of the Mayo Clinic Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Dr Schaff attended the University of Oklahoma as an undergraduate, and then as a medical student, completing a National Institutes of Health Research Fellowship. He completed medical school in 1969 as valedictorian and president of his class. He then moved on to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, to train in general and thoracic surgery; among the 21 residents in a 7-year program that has been described as steeply pyramidal, Dr Schaff was 1 of only 3 to complete the program. During that time, he also completed a research fellowship in Johns Hopkins' Cardiovascular Surgical Research Laboratory, where his work—uncovering mechanisms by which ischemia-reperfusion injury to the myocardium impairs diastolic function—earned him the George D. Zuidema Resident Research Award.

Upon finishing his residency in 1980, Dr Schaff joined the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He was chair of the clinic's Division of Cardiovascular Surgery from 2001 to 2011, and his work there eventually led to the division becoming a full-blown department. In 2012, Dr Schaff was elected president of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS); 9 years later, AATS would present him its Lifetime Achievement Award.



Hartzell V. Schaff, MD

One focus of Dr Schaff's career as a surgeon-scientist has been the treatment of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM). He has been a leader in developing surgical and endovascular treatments for this condition, including apical myectomy for treating apical HCM. Another of Dr Schaff's areas of expertise is the surgical treatment of mitral valve disease, for which he has performed and reported large series of cases. He was an early advocate of surgical mitral valve repair and helped develop a new method of leaflet reconstruction. Dr Schaff also has long experience in surgery for adult congenital heart disease, including anomalous pulmonary venous return and aortic coarctation.

Word of Dr Schaff's research achievements has reached beyond academic circles. He published the first large-scale study to associate the use of the weight-loss drug Fen-Phen (a combination of fenfluramine and phentermine) with left-sided valvular regurgitation. Soon there-

after, the US Food and Drug Administration requested that this drug be withdrawn from the market. This report was just 1 of the more than 1200 manuscripts that Dr Schaff has written in his lifetime.

Outside of work, Dr Schaff is known as a die-hard golfer who plays regularly with his friends and surgical colleagues. During the harsh Minnesota winters, when he cannot visit a golf course or driving range, he uses the indoor golf center he set up in his home. In 2015, he played a round of golf at Augusta National Golf Club as a guest of his colleagues Drs Wayne Isom and Len Girardi, who were also accompanied by Drs Lawrence Cohn and Joseph Coselli.

In his introduction of Dr Schaff at the Ray C. Fish Award lecture, The Texas Heart Institute President and CEO Joseph Rogers stated that "he is not a typical cardiac surgeon—he is extraordinary."

Roll of Recipients

of The Texas Heart Institute Medal and the Ray C. Fish Award for Scientific Achievement in Cardiovascular Diseases

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>2025 Hartzell V. Schaff
Cardiovascular Surgery (<i>Recognized for his groundbreaking contributions to adult and congenital cardiac surgery, revolutionizing surgical techniques and improving patient care worldwide</i>)</p> | <p>2019 Emerson C. Perin
Interventional Cardiology (<i>Research in regenerative medicine and stem cells and development of novel stem cell treatments for patients</i>)</p> |
| <p>2024 Gary Sidney Samuel Roubin
Interventional Cardiology (<i>Recognized for his pioneering work in coronary artery and carotid stenting. He is also acknowledged for the development of the first FDA-approved coronary stent.</i>)</p> | <p>2018 Joseph S. Coselli
Cardiovascular Surgery (<i>Knowledge of and exceptional technical expertise in thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysm repair</i>)</p> |
| <p>2023 Tirone E. David
Cardiovascular Surgery (<i>World-renowned for pioneering surgical innovation and procedures to treat patients with heart valve disease, complications of myocardial infarction, and diseases of the thoracic aorta.</i>)</p> | <p>2016 David A. Ott
Cardiovascular Surgery (<i>Knowledge of and exceptional technical expertise in cardiovascular surgery</i>)</p> |
| <p>2020 Christine E. Seidman
Cardiovascular Genetics (<i>Research in molecular mechanisms of cardiomyopathy and other heart diseases</i>)</p> | <p>2015 Delos M. Cosgrove
Cardiovascular Surgery (<i>Significant contributions to cardiac valve repair</i>)</p> |
| | <p>2014 Terence English
Cardiovascular Surgery (<i>Establishing the heart transplantation program in England</i>)</p> |

- 2013 Alain G. Cribier**
Interventional Cardiology (*First balloon dilation of an aortic valve for calcific aortic stenosis, 1985; first implantation of a prosthetic aortic valve via cardiac catheterization, 2002*)
- 2012 George J. Reul**
Cardiac and Vascular Surgery (*Development of an accredited vascular lab at St Luke's Episcopal Health System; leader in quality measures*)
- 2011 Patrick W. Serruys**
Interventional Cardiology (*Major contributions to interventional cardiology, including those to the development of both bare-metal and drug-eluting stents*)
- 2010 Charles D. Fraser, Jr**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Development of a program known for its effectiveness in correcting congenital cardiovascular disease in children*)
- 2009 James T. Willerson**
Cardiology (*Pioneering work in unstable atherosclerotic plaques, acute coronary syndromes, and cardiac stem cells*)
- 2008 O. H. Frazier**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Heart transplantation as well as research and development of the left ventricular assist device*)
- 2007 Charles E. Mullins**
Pediatric Cardiology (*Teaching and pioneering work in interventional techniques for congenital heart disease*)
- 2004 Stephen Westaby**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*First clinical trial of axial-flow devices for destination therapy and significant contributions to the surgical literature*)
- 2004 James L. Cox**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Surgery for atrial fibrillation*)
- 1999 Thomas J. Fogarty**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Medical and surgical devices*)
- 1998 Magdi Yacoub**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Heart-lung transplantation*)
- 1997 Julio C. Palmaz**
Radiology (*Endovascular stents*)
- 1997 Aldo R. Castañeda**
Pediatric Cardiovascular Surgery
- 1992 Arthur S. Keats**
Cardiovascular Anesthesiology
- 1990 Sol Sherry**
Cardiology (*Thrombolytic therapy*)
- 1989 Robert J. Hall**
Cardiology (*Clinical practice and teaching*)
- 1988 J. Willis Hurst**
Cardiology (*Writing and teaching*)
- 1987 Dwight E. Harken**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Intracardiac surgery*)
- 1986 William J. Rashkind**
Pediatric Cardiology (*Nonsurgical treatment of congenital heart disease*)
- 1985 Denton A. Cooley**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Surgery for congenital heart disease, aneurysms of the aorta, and implantation of the artificial heart*)
- 1984 Hein J. J. Wellens and Douglas P. Zipes (co-recipients)**
Cardiology (*Diagnosis and management of pediatric cardiac arrhythmias*)
- 1983 Andreas R. Gruentzig**
Cardiology (*Percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty*)
- 1981 Paul M. Zoll**
Cardiology (*Pacemaking*)
- 1980 W. Proctor Harvey**
Cardiology (*Clinical practice and teaching*)
- 1979 John J. Gallagher and William C. Sealy (co-recipients)**
Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery (*Surgery for preexcitation*)
- 1978 Bernard Lown**
Cardiology (*Cardiac arrhythmias*)
- 1977 John W. Kirklin**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Heart-lung machines*)

- 1976 **Harvey Feigenbaum**
Cardiology (*Echocardiography*)
- 1975 **Willem J. Kolff**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Artificial organs*)
- 1974 **Eugene E. Braunwald**
Physiology (*Myocardial preservation*)
- 1973 **F. Mason Sones, Jr**
Cardiology (*Coronary angiography*)
- 1972 **Norman E. Shumway**
Cardiovascular Surgery (*Heart transplantation*)

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