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## 2021 Bernard Lown Humanitarian Award: Paul Plourde

Bruce Levitt

Paul Plourde

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*The College of Our Hearts Always*

2021 Bernard Lown Humanitarian Award: Paul Plourde, 1973, 1974G, MD

Recorded via Zoom on June 24, 2021

<https://youtu.be/HONORLNheic>

Run Time : 00:10:49

**Transcript is machine generated, unedited, in English.**

00:01

the university of maine alumni

00:03

association

00:04

bernard lounge humanitarian award is

00:06

sponsored by

00:07

the university of maine foundation

00:11

i'm dr bruce levitt

00:14

dr paul plourde may be best described as

00:17

a clinical investigator

00:19

with your help we can improve the

00:21

quality of life for american women

00:23

and their families thank you colleagues

00:27

call dr plort's contributions to novel

00:29

hormonal treatments of breast cancer

00:31

unparalleled for those who have advanced

00:34

breast cancer incurable you'd like to  
00:38  
develop therapies to make them live  
00:41  
longer and  
00:42  
better for those patients  
00:45  
with curative cancer you like to develop  
00:49  
therapies to decrease the likelihood of  
00:51  
it ever coming back  
00:53  
and ultimately you like to develop  
00:56  
therapies from  
00:57  
for preventing cancer from occurring in  
00:59  
the first place  
01:01  
paul's triumphs were in all three  
01:04  
potential goals for the development of  
01:07  
an anti-cancer drug for breast cancer  
01:09  
he was instrumental in developing an  
01:11  
astrozole when we have new  
01:13  
possibilities in both medicine and  
01:16  
medical devices and what we want to do  
01:17  
is get those to people as quickly as  
01:19  
possible  
01:20  
just as the clinton administration  
01:22  
sought to accelerate fda approval of  
01:24

safe and efficacious drugs  
01:26  
well dr plourde knew about that and so  
01:28  
when he heard that  
01:30  
he submitted the application for  
01:32  
approval of anastrozole  
01:34  
right away most drugs take at least  
01:37  
two or three years and the drug was  
01:40  
approved in 43 days  
01:43  
anastrozole really became the treatment  
01:45  
for hormone-dependent  
01:47  
breast cancer the federal food and drug  
01:49  
administration recently approved a new  
01:50  
drug to treat breast cancer  
01:52  
the new drug is considered a  
01:54  
breakthrough for women who have advanced  
01:55  
breast cancer  
01:56  
that offers quality of life to these  
01:58  
women which  
02:00  
in previous years they did not have with  
02:02  
these drugs so this is an advance  
02:04  
for women with advanced breast cancer dr  
02:06  
plourde also helped  
02:08

bring a life-saving drug to american  
02:09  
children you know childhood leukemias  
02:11  
was  
02:12  
was a death sentence for young children  
02:15  
for a long time  
02:16  
until chemotherapy came around that  
02:18  
literally converted a  
02:20  
death sentence to a to a cure  
02:24  
many children developed an allergy to  
02:25  
treatment but irwin ozzie  
02:27  
developed in europe from a different  
02:29  
microorganism could safely treat  
02:31  
children with the allergy  
02:32  
plor joined eusa pharmacy to bring  
02:35  
erinaza to the united states  
02:37  
one of the most attractive things about  
02:39  
paul in  
02:40  
in that interview was how much he cared  
02:43  
about  
02:45  
the idea that this was a very important  
02:48  
medicine  
02:49  
that would really help  
02:50

[Music]

02:52

children in the us eusa launched a

02:55

program to deliver the treatment to

02:57

patients on a compassionate basis

02:59

over the course of about four years we

03:02

treated

03:02

just short of 1400 patients that's quite

03:06

a lot of people to benefit isn't it

03:08

that's kind of

03:09

like one a day um and there aren't many

03:12

doctors who can say that they've

03:14

they've given a life potentially

03:16

life-saving cure to

03:18

one patient a day for every day of four

03:21

years

03:23

ordinarily someone that works for a

03:25

pharmaceutical company

03:28

it's a very much top-down organization

03:32

and there's not a lot of individual

03:35

innovation where an individual with

03:37

vision

03:38

can put forward forward their idea in a

03:41

large organization  
03:42  
and have that come out and be  
03:44  
accomplished paul did that  
03:46  
he has a broad compassion for patients  
03:49  
and it's  
03:49  
underpinned by a very scientific brain  
03:53  
actually  
03:54  
his scope of impact has been really  
03:58  
rather dramatic from breast cancer  
04:02  
and different forms of breast cancer  
04:05  
to childhood cancers it's been really  
04:08  
quite dramatic  
04:09  
over the last 20 years progressive  
04:12  
stages of treatment have occurred to the  
04:14  
point  
04:15  
that women with very early disease are  
04:18  
being treated and that's very exciting  
04:19  
because  
04:20  
a significant number of women now will  
04:23  
be cured of their disease  
04:24  
with surgery and with tamoxifen  
04:29  
dr plourde you don't know me but i know  
04:32

you my name is jenny lloyd and i'm a

04:35

breast cancer survivor

04:37

my job my joy is to guide women

04:41

and men to the support and care they

04:44

need

04:45

at northern light cancer care

04:48

on behalf of the hundreds and thousands

04:52

of patients living and living better

04:55

lives

04:57

thank you dr paul plourde a saver of

05:00

hundreds of thousands of lives

05:02

and recipient of our bernard brown

05:05

humanitarian

05:06

award being in the medical profession dr

05:09

lown's contribution is well known to

05:11

many of us

05:12

truly a great honor to receive this

05:14

award bearing his name

05:16

[Music]

05:18

i was recently asked what the most

05:19

important thing university of maine did

05:21

for me

05:22



certainly they provided me with a great  
05:24  
education  
05:26  
and a nurturing environment but the best  
05:28  
was meeting my wife  
05:29  
nancy while at the university when i  
05:32  
told my wife about being selected for  
05:34  
this award  
05:36  
i could see her first thoughts boy is he  
05:39  
going to be harder to put up with now  
05:42  
i'm fortunate and glad that she did put  
05:45  
up with me all these years  
05:46  
and allowing me to pursue my passion  
05:50  
she was a great student at the  
05:51  
university of maine and also became a  
05:53  
physician  
05:55  
early in my medical career i quickly  
05:58  
realized the power  
06:00  
and the importance of having effective  
06:02  
and safe medicines  
06:04  
while a medical student at the  
06:05  
university of vermont my first clinical  
06:08  
rotation was surgery  
06:10

very early one morning i accompanied a

06:13

general surgeon

06:14

to see an 80 year old woman who had

06:16

significant gi bleeding

06:18

due to peptic ulcer disease the surgeon

06:22

explained to the family

06:23

that she would certainly die without

06:25

surgery

06:26

but even with surgery her chance of

06:28

surviving

06:30

was very low due to her advanced age

06:33

she died two days later

06:37

today with better medicines to control

06:40

peptic ulcer disease

06:41

we rarely see the morbidity and

06:44

mortality that this woman suffered

06:46

the surgical procedure that this 80 year

06:49

old received

06:50

is rarely done today because of the

06:52

power of good medicines

06:56

as i progressed in my medical training i

06:58

always wanted

07:00

and needed better medicines which were  
07:02  
often lacking  
07:03  
for the most critically ill patients in  
07:06  
my endocrine practice i saw the ravages  
07:08  
of diabetes  
07:10  
and yet the medications and tools to  
07:12  
control blood sugars  
07:14  
were either lacking or sub-optimal i  
07:17  
needed better medications to offer  
07:19  
patients this was one of the reasons i  
07:22  
entered the pharmaceutical industry  
07:26  
i was fortunate to have the opportunity  
07:28  
to participate  
07:29  
and lead teams developing drugs the  
07:31  
transformation of a small molecule into  
07:34  
a drug is a lengthy  
07:36  
complex and regulated process that  
07:39  
cannot be done by one individual  
07:41  
these teams share my accomplishments  
07:43  
including this award  
07:45  
that i am honored with today  
07:48  
each team member was inspired by the  
07:51

thought

07:51

that our work would help patients always

07:54

remembering that a patient could be a

07:55

family member

07:56

a friend a colleague and possibly even

07:59

ourselves

08:00

i never realized that my journey in

08:02

developing breast cancer medications

08:04

would have a profound effect on my own

08:06

family

08:08

my mother was diagnosed with early stage

08:10

breast cancer was given tamoxifen

08:12

a drug i helped to develop for early

08:15

stage disease

08:17

after four years on tamoxifen she had a

08:20

recurrence

08:21

which unfortunately gave her a life

08:23

expectancy of about two years

08:25

after receiving this news i met with her

08:28

oncologist

08:29

and he agreed to give her a new hormonal

08:31

agent that the team and i had just

08:33

developed  
08:34  
and the fda had just approved the drug  
08:37  
was a remedies  
08:38  
she gained an additional three years of  
08:40  
life beyond which  
08:43  
was predicted remedies had been given  
08:46  
had given her the most precious gift of  
08:48  
time  
08:49  
that is the power of good medicines a  
08:52  
little over 10 years  
08:54  
ago my wife was diagnosed with early  
08:56  
breast cancer  
08:57  
and was also given arimidex and  
08:59  
tamoxifen  
09:01  
she is now a long-term breast cancer  
09:03  
survivor  
09:04  
thank god for good medicines  
09:08  
my accomplishments are really those  
09:10  
teams accomplishments  
09:12  
but the most important team member i  
09:14  
failed to emphasize previously is the  
09:16  
patient  
09:17

patients who enroll in clinical trials  
09:19  
and teach us so much  
09:20  
sure many inter clinical trials are  
09:23  
motivated by hope  
09:24  
that they will derive some clinical  
09:26  
benefit but most  
09:27  
also participate in clinical trials to  
09:30  
benefit future patients  
09:31  
with the same disease these clinical  
09:34  
trial  
09:34  
volunteers did so as humanitarians  
09:37  
helping to find more treatment options  
09:40  
and better medicines for people they did  
09:42  
not know  
09:43  
would never know but yet they felt a  
09:45  
strong kinship  
09:47  
it is these patients that are truly  
09:49  
humanitarians and for them i'm delighted  
09:51  
to accept this great honor  
09:54  
in closing i want to thank my chemical  
09:56  
engineering instructors at the  
09:57  
university of maine who supported my  
09:59

quest  
10:00  
to enter medical school at the time  
10:03  
there was no biomedical engineering  
10:04  
program at the school  
10:06  
but they continued to encourage me to  
10:07  
pursue my ambitions  
10:09  
also thank you to my many brothers at  
10:11  
sigma phi epsilon  
10:13  
in particular my roommate jim tamro who  
10:16  
made my journey at the university so  
10:18  
special  
10:19  
a special thank you to dr sand locker  
10:22  
and corn for nominating me  
10:24  
and thank you at the university of maine  
10:26  
go black bears  
10:49  
you  
English (auto-generated)

*The University of Maine in Orono is the flagship campus of the University of Maine System, where efforts toward racial equity are ongoing, as is the commitment to facing a complicated and not always just institutional history. The University recognizes that it is located on Marsh Island in the homeland of the Penobscot nation, where issues of water and its territorial rights, and encroachment upon sacred sites, are ongoing. Penobscot homeland is connected to the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations — the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac — through kinship, alliances, and diplomacy. The university also recognizes that the Penobscot Nation and the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations are distinct, sovereign, legal and political entities with their own powers of self-governance and self-determination.*