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### **UCSD's Palmer Taylor Awarded 2009 Axelrod Award in Pharmacology**

Palmer Taylor, Ph.D., associate vice chancellor for Health Sciences, and founding dean of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of California, San Diego, has been awarded the 2009 Julius Axelrod Award in Pharmacology by the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET). Taylor also holds the Sandra & Monroe Trout Chair in Pharmacology.

The Julius Axelrod Award was established to honor the memory of the eminent American pharmacologist and Nobel laureate, who shaped the fields of neuroscience, drug metabolism and biochemistry and who served as a mentor for numerous eminent scientists around the world. Presented annually for significant contributions to understanding the biochemical mechanisms underlying the pharmacological actions of drugs and for contributions to mentoring other pharmacologists, the award includes a \$5,000 honorarium.

Joan Heller Brown, Ph.D., chair of UC San Diego's department of pharmacology, who nominated Taylor for the award, said "Palmer Taylor exemplifies all that an academic pharmacologist should aspire to be – a first rate research scientist, a superb mentor, a scholarly and enthusiastic teacher, and an individual dedicated to preserving, expanding and promoting training in the pharmacological sciences."

Taylor will deliver the Julius Axelrod Lecture at the Experimental Biology annual meeting in New Orleans in April 2009 and organize the Julius Axelrod Symposium in the following year.

ASPET is a 4,800 member scientific society whose members conduct basic and clinical pharmacological research in academia, industry and the government. Members research efforts help develop new medicines and therapeutic agents to fight existing and emerging diseases. Taylor served as ASPET President from 1995 to 1996.

Taylor's research has been directed to signaling by a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine, used by the body's nervous system to communicate and control nerve and muscle function. His group cloned the first acetylcholinesterase (AChE) gene over 20 years ago. AChE is an enzyme involved in regulating acetylcholine levels in the nervous system. This discovery was followed by analysis of its genomic DNA to delineate

regulatory regions, the multiple splicing options and gene expression profiles in nerve and muscle. Taylor also studies the molecular recognition properties of the nicotinic acetylcholine receptor, a protein transducing acetylcholine signals. Recently, his collaborative endeavors have uncovered much of what is known about the structure of neuroligin, a synaptic adhesion molecule associated with mutations found in autism.