

Speech of Professor
Finn Waagstein
Winner of King Faisal International Prize
For Medicine 2002/1422H.

Saturday 9.3.2002 (25.12.1422H)

Your Royal Highness Prince Sultan Ibn Abd Ali Aziz, Second Deputy Premier, Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector General, Your Highnesses,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Audience

It is a great honour for me to have been selected by your nominating committee as the co-winner of King Faisal International prize in Medicine this year knowing how highly honoured this prize is among researchers in the medical community worldwide. To the best of my knowledge I am the second winner of King Faisal prize in medicine from Scandinavia. I am overwhelmingly pleased to be able to come together with members of my family to Riyadh to receive this prize from you. The fact that late King Faisal Foundation has established this prize in medicine and science reminds me how important clinical medicine, medical research, and science including mathematics have been in the Arabic world already in the early period shortly after Islam was established in Bilad al Islam the Arabic cultural sphere extending from Spain in the west to India in the east, and from Transoxiana in the north to Yemen in the south allowing a free flow of people and ideas using Arabic as a common language both for speech and writing. Clinical medicine had achieved a high standard in the Arabic world at a time when the old knowledge from the ancient Greece, Hippocrates and Galenos, has been forgotten in Europe. The knowledge from the old Greeks was taken up and developed further among Arabic physicians and in addition there were also serious attempts to try to understand the underlying mechanisms for the diseases. This was a new approach in medicine. New drugs were developed which showed to be effective in a variety of diseases. The knowledge from the Arabian countries remained together with knowledge from ancient Greece the highest

authority for many centuries in European medicine. To name a few extinguished Arabic physicians we should remember D. Jibail who established a hospital in Bagdad which served as a model for hospitals in Western Europe this knowledge was brought back by the crusaders from Palestine to Europe. We should not forget Hunyan Ibn Ishaq who wrote a book on eye diseases which was wide spread in Bilad al Islam at that time. These physicians demonstrated clearly that clinical observations in patients are the fundament for development in medicine but also that understanding of mechanisms is important in order to rationalize medical treatment and raise practice of medicine above magic and homeopathy. My research has also been aiming at exploring a completely new and very controversial treatment concept for heart failure based on clinical observations. My aim has also been to explore mechanisms for the effect of this treatment.

His majesty King Faisal has made great investments in free health care in Saudi Arabia which has reached high international standard as well as in the rest of the infrastructure of your great country. Several of my cardiology colleagues who have worked in you country have confirmed this. As a teacher in medicine at our faculty of medicine it has been a pleasure to teach many students from Arabic countries including Saudi Arabia as well as physicians in postgraduate training in Sweden and at courses abroad. May the present situation in the world not prevent us from having a continuous fruitful cooperation between our countries.