



SSR Research Award

(Supported by the Society for the Study of Reproduction)

The SSR Research Award recognizes an active, regular member of the Society for outstanding research published during the previous six years. Criteria for the Award include the significance of problems under investigation, the breadth and depth of the analyses performed, and the level of originality manifested in the publications of this work. The recipient of the 2010 SSR Research Award is **Asgerally T. Fazleabas, Ph.D.**

The recipient of the 2010 SSR Research Award is Dr. Asgerally “Asgi” T. Fazleabas. Dr. Fazleabas received his undergraduate degree from the California State University in Fresno and his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He began his academic career at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Chicago in 1983 after completing his postdoctoral training in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of Reproduction at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Between 1983 and 1995, he advanced to the rank of Professor of Physiology in the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Physiology and Biophysics and became Director of the Center for Women’s Health and Reproduction in 2002. Recently, Dr. Fazleabas moved to Michigan State University, Grand Rapids, where he is currently Professor and Associate Chair for Research in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Reproductive Biology as well as Director of the Center for Women’s Health Research.

The stated criteria for the SSR Research Award are Originality, Experimental Practices, and Leadership, and Dr. Fazleabas possesses excellence in each. Throughout his entire career, he has been outstanding by making influential observations, generating novel animal models, and aiding other researchers. First and foremost, Dr. Fazleabas is considered to be a leading authority in the field of uterine biology and blastocyst implantation. His laboratory clearly

established that the baboon is an excellent nonhuman primate model for studies of this nature, which are unique and of enormous clinical significance. These basic studies have direct relevance to human fertility since at present the major obstacle to even greater success in human infertility therapy is successful implantation of the fertilized embryo. Understanding the critical cellular events that define synchrony between the developing embryo and the maternal uterus is paramount in improving the success of assisted reproductive therapies. One of his critical research findings in the area of blastocyst implantation was that chorionic gonadotropin, the pregnancy recognition signal in humans and primates that has direct luteotrophic effects on the corpus luteum, has additional direct effects on the endometrium that are important for uterine receptivity and blastocyst implantation. More recently, his laboratory established a novel baboon model for endometriosis. The focus of these studies is to understand the etiology and pathophysiology of endometriosis, a poorly understood, enigmatic disease that affects all women of reproductive age and is considered the leading cause of infertility in women. These studies are also funded by the NIH as part of the Specialized Cooperative Centers Program in Reproductive Research. The unique nature of the primate model that he has developed to study endometriosis and the strong multi-disciplinary

group that he has established has led to important and fundamental findings regarding the causative effects of endometriosis on aberrant gene expression in the eutopic endometrium that may contribute to infertility and serve as potential biomarkers of endometriosis. As recognition of Dr. Fazleabas as an innovator and scholar by his peers, he has presented 64 invited talks during the past six years. During his career, he has over 148 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, 39 book chapters and invited reviews, and continuous funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for his research since 1986. In the past six years, he has been an author or coauthor of 59 journal articles and 12 book chapters and invited reviews. Moreover, he is currently an investigator or co-investigator on 3 active extramural grants, including NIH-funded individual and center grants.

Aside from his pioneering research, he has provided critical leadership and selfless service to the field of Reproductive Biology over the last six years. From 2001 to 2004, he served as the Lead Director for the Frontiers in Reproduction Course held annually at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. At the national level, he was a member of the NIH study section on Human Embryology and Development for five years (1992-1997) and then served on the

Reproductive Biology Study section from 2000-2004 and also chaired this study section from 2002-2004. He also continues to serve regularly on several other NIH study sections and Special Emphasis Panels. He has also been asked to serve as a panel member to evaluate program projects on Incentives for Contraceptive Research outlined by the Institute of Medicine and supported by the Mellon Foundation. Further, he was Vice Chair and Chair of the Gordon Research Conference on Reproductive Tract Biology in 2002 and 2004, respectively, and has organized several international workshops and symposia. Most importantly, Dr. Fazleabas has served SSR at all levels including serving as a member of the Editorial Board and Board of Directors, Chair of many standing and *ad hoc* committees including strategic planning, and recent service as President-Elect, President and Past President of our society.

In summary, Dr. Fazleabas is an outstanding prominent researcher in Reproductive Biology whose research, leadership and service is unparalleled and benefits the Society for the Study of Reproduction as well as many other scientific fields and society in general. Thus, Dr. Asgi Fazleabas is most deserving of the SSR Research Award (*Submitted by Dr. Thomas E. Spencer*).