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Franz-Ulrich Hartl receives Lasker Award Award for Research on Protein Folding

Proteins are the cell's molecular building material and machinery, and they are involved in nearly every bioprocess. Together with Arthur L. Horwich (Yale University, USA), Franz-Ulrich Hartl, director at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry, will be awarded the 2011 Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award for his research on protein folding. The prize comes with a shared \$250,000 honorarium and will be awarded by the Lasker Foundation on September 23, 2011 in New York, USA.

Hartl and Horwich discovered that not all proteins can fold inside cells by themselves. They determined that a protein called Chaperonin acts as a cage-like folding "machine" that provides a safe place for proteins to fold, away from outside interference. "By unraveling the mysterious workings of these amazing machines, the researchers gave the medical world a key understanding of how proteins reach their biological potential", says Maria C. Freire, President of the Lasker Foundation. Because faulty proteins also play a role in neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson, Hartl's results could contribute significantly to developing new drugs for the treatment of these diseases.

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