

2011 Bernard Lown '42 Alumni Humanitarian Award

Presented to:
Dr. Conan Kornetsky '48

The Bernard Lown '42 Alumni Humanitarian Award recognizes University of Maine graduates who distinguish themselves in their service to humanity. It is named in honor of Nobel Laureate Dr. Bernard Lown '42, who has devoted his life to world disarmament and the advancement of human health.

This year's Humanitarian Award recipient, Dr. Conan Kornetsky '48, entered the University of Maine in 1943 as an engineering student. Like many of his classmates, his studies were interrupted by World War II, in which he served as a member of the Army Air Corps. Upon returning to the University after the war, his academic interest shifted to psychology, and in 1948 he graduated with a degree in that field. He went on to earn both a master's and a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky, where he embarked on a long and remarkable career as a researcher—a career that has placed him among the most important figures in psychopharmacology (the study of drug-induced changes in mood, thinking, and behavior) in the United States.

His first research venture was a clinical study on the social and psychological factors in juvenile drug addiction. It was one of the first studies to establish the role of environmental influences on drug dependency. He then began a comprehensive series of experimental studies on the behavioral effects of centrally acting drugs in humans. These experiments, conducted between 1954 and 1970, were instrumental in the development of the “attentional model” in schizophrenia. His continued work in this area has provided the basis for current hypotheses for the neurobiological basis of schizophrenia.

During this same period, Dr. Kornetsky began a series of studies with opiates that would lead to further studies on brain stimulation reward and drug abuse. He was one of the first to investigate the effects of abused substances on the brain-reward system.

Later in his career at Boston University School of Medicine, Dr. Kornetsky began some exciting experiments that suggested that opioid antagonists might be beneficial in the control of movements associated with Huntington's disease as well as other disorders. As a result of his work, the neurology department at BU is now exploring the use of Naltrexone in Huntington's disease patients.

Now well into his 80s, Dr. Kornetsky continues to pursue knowledge and insight into the relationship of drugs and the brain. A true Renaissance man in the field of drug dependency, he

integrates knowledge across all areas of drug abuse research and utilizes his creative mind to consistently open up new areas of study.

In addition, tonight's Humanitarian Award recipient is highly respected for his ethical standards, as well as for his generosity, patience, and support of young people in his field. His enthusiasm for his work is contagious and has motivated and inspired scores of aspiring researchers.

It's a great honor to present the 2011 Bernard Lown Alumni Humanitarian Award to an alumnus that many consider to be the premier psychopharmacologist in America—a man whose lifetime of work has contributed enormously to our understanding of drug abuse, Dr. Conan Kornetsky, Class of 1948.

Presented by Kurt R. Marston '74, '79G
Chair, University of Maine Alumni Association