



Prof. Dr. Dimitrios José Fotiadis

“...he delivers the full package.”

Student's comment

Teacher of the Year Award - Bachelor Program

Structured, logical and comprehensible lectures, as well as his humorous, student-oriented and enthusiastic manner have led to Prof. Fotiadis winning the Teacher of the Year Award 2023 (Bachelor). This Prize is awarded annually by the Bachelor of Medicine students in Bern to honour excellent teaching.

Membrane proteins are his great passion. And this didn't remain hidden from his students for very long. They agreed on one thing: Regardless of whether they share his passion for GPCR's[G protein-coupled receptors] or not, Prof. Fotiadis manages to impart to them his logical, structured way of thinking. And they appreciate his well-designed, compact slides which are easy to understand and learn from. According to students' comments, he always makes an effort to interact with them during the lectures, welcoming questions and addressing the salient ones during the weekly recap lesson. He revealed that, although giving similar lectures every year, each year's cohort of students "positively astonish" him with fresh feedback and interesting questions he had not thought of before. He then goes through the literature to find answers. This dedication to knowledge and his students is recognized and highly valued in his lectures and courses. According to him, teaching should first and foremost be fun. Ideally, lectures are structured, pragmatic, to the point, logical and - most importantly - always tailored to his target audience. Learning requirements should be realistic and there ought to be sufficient time in the curriculum for self-study. Optimally, a lecture is a team effort between the teacher and the students, with both sides exchanging information with one another. As an example: during the pandemic, he introduced a discussion panel with a virologist where students could address important

issues and deepen their knowledge about virology in an interactive educational event. The students appreciate his well-prepared lectures, at the start of which he always makes sure that the microphone settings as well as the lighting in the room are optimal, and at the end of which there are no urgent questions left open.

About the laureate... Early on, Prof. Fotiadis was fascinated by microscopy. He has always been a very logical and structure-loving person. That's probably why he studied molecular biology at the University of Basel, where he completed a PhD in biochemistry and then a habilitation in biophysics at the Biozentrum. In his early career, he did research in Seattle (USA), where he met one of his mentors: Krzysztof Palczewski, known for his research on Rhodopsin. He then came to Bern to take up a tenure-track professorship in membrane transport proteins. All in all, Prof. Fotiadis is a knowledge-seeking person. After some years of research in one area, he generally likes to turn to new topics. As of now, he is excited about the new electron microscope in Bern. In his office, there are numerous 3D prints and molecule models on the shelves giving a hint about his current research projects. He plans to conduct research in structure-based drug design as well as virology, in collaboration with Vetsuisse. Even in his spare time he is eager to learn. Currently, he likes to spend cozy Sundays reading about ancient cultures – especially in art history. He is described as a very active person who likes, or even needs, new challenges.

The students in Bern are glad to have committed teachers like him and congratulate him on winning the award.

“I use the art of storytelling to facilitate the memory process. Once emotions are evoked, memory is easier.”

A. Lugli



Prof. Dr. med. Alessandro Lugli

Teacher of the Year Award - Master Program

Have you ever sat in a lecture and felt like you were following a plot in a movie? The fourth-year medical students in their EKP [clinical practice internship] semester did – not just once, but twice in a row. How and why this occurred is down to one person: Prof. Alessandro Lugli.

The successful chief pathologist, specializing in gastrointestinal pathology, had been giving these lectures for years as “just another normal lecture”. But last year was different. He wanted to upgrade and transform his lectures on tumors, polyps and inflammation of the lower gastrointestinal tract. He gave a lot of thought to how he could achieve this transformation before realizing that the solution was right in front of him. If there is one particular thing he is good at, besides pathology then it’s storytelling and screenplay writing.

For eight years, Prof. Lugli has been developing this hobby. In his spare time, he practices writing scripts and reads a lot about films, their making and storytelling. His library even has books whose topics range from history - especially Napoleon - to screenplays. His practice involves watching films - anywhere from three to twelve a week. In pathology, you also learn by examining as many specimens as possible. He has applied this to his hobby as well.

Following the motto: “one thing can help you do another thing better”, he used his hobby to turn his lectures into two narratives called “Through the Storm I and II”, featuring Kate and Jans Stur - two siblings with gastrointestinal symptoms and who are incredibly difficult to convince they should get them checked out. As he took the students through these two stories, he made sure the relevant slides were explained and available for download. His hope was to use the art

of storytelling to facilitate the memory process. Once emotions are evoked, memory is easier.

He applied the basic rules of storytelling, so then, not much could go wrong. There had been some practice with an audience in his work breaks at the Institute of Tissue Medicine and Pathology. And then his big day came - and he delivered. After his lectures, many of the students nominated him for the Teacher of the Year Award, which has the Category “Master” for the first time. And he promptly won it.

Prof. Lugli completed his further education in a triangle: medical studies in Zurich, doctorate in Bern and habilitation in Basel. He is a very visual person - he thinks in images - and therefore knew, early on in his studies, which specialties he could imagine going into: Dermatology, Gastroenterology or Pathology. With gastrointestinal pathology, he combined two of his favorites. He describes the core part of his job as helping the patient with images, concentrating on the important aspects and transferring this information to the treating physician in order to optimize patient management and outcome. In recent years, to facilitate and improve the visual evaluation of histological specimens, he even developed the “Pathojet” I: an ergonomic chair with a cockpit-like computer station. All this shows that he is very innovative and engaged in his job as well as in teaching. For him, the essential part of a university is the students - without them, it wouldn’t be one. For that reason, he wants to provide the best lectures possible for the university and the students. The aim is to let students take something positive away from his lectures as well as a good learning experience. A good teacher should prepare his students for their future everyday life by not losing sight of the wood for the trees. The effort he puts into his teaching is highly appreciated.