

Nobel prize given to medical researchers

BOSTON (AP)— Two Swedes and an Englishman shared the Nobel Prize for Medicine on Monday for their research into a group of body chemicals that affect human ills ranging from arthritis and high blood pressure to asthma and painful menstruation.

The prize was awarded to Sune Bergstrom and Bengt I. Samuelsson of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm and John R. Vane of the Wellcome Research Foundation in Beckenham, England, who all happened to be in Boston at the time.

Their research has delved into the workings and chemistry of a perplexing group of substances called prostaglandins, which are similar to hormones. Scientists believe they may be able to treat a variety of stubborn disorders by manipulating these substances, found

throughout the human body and the animal world.

All three men are in Boston this week to speak at scientific meetings held as part of the bicentennial celebration at Harvard Medical School.

They sipped champagne together in a medical school lecture hall, and Bergstrom promised they would hold "a joint symposium" to figure out how to spend the \$157,000 prize money.

"It's certainly most gratifying that your colleagues value the work that you have been fighting with for the past 35 years," said Bergstrom, 66, who is sometimes called the father of prostaglandin chemistry.

Added Samuelsson: "It's a very nice way to wake up."

The three had shared the 1977 Albert Lasker Basic Medical Award, given by

the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation in New York, for their research.

Prostaglandins were discovered in the early 1930s, but only in the 1960s did scientists learn how to make modified versions, called analogues, that could be used to treat specific disorders.

The chemicals are now the subject of intense study, and about 5,000 scientific articles about them are published each year.

Among potential uses for the substances are treating heart attacks, high blood pressure, asthma, ulcers and blocked nasal passages.

Vane, 55, said many of the cardiovascular disorders that occur as people grow older may soon be eased with prostaglandins.

"The whole field has been one excitement after another," he said.

Vane's research into prostaglandins

revealed how aspirin works. He discovered 11 years ago that the common painkiller makes people feel better because it blocks the body's production of prostaglandins.

Prostaglandins are made in the body from unsaturated fatty acids.

"I think the coming 50 years will be just as exciting as the past 50 have been in this field," said Bergstrom who also is chairman of the board of directors of the Nobel Foundation. He and Samuelsson began working together when Samuelsson was his student.

Medicine was the first prize announced this year in the series established in the will of Alfred Nobel, the Swedish inventor of dynamite. The next award, the Peace Prize, will be announced Wednesday by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo.

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Tuesday, October 12, 1982