

Polish and Turkish health-care innovators among recipients of public health prizes at World Health Assembly



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The Severe Hypothermia Treatment Centre in Krakow, Poland, and Professor Mehmet Haberal of Başkent University in Ankara, Turkey, have today been presented with WHO-supported awards recognizing their long-term and outstanding contribution to global public health.

Professor Haberal received the Ihsan Doğramacı Family Health Foundation Prize, while the Severe Hypothermia Treatment Centre received the Dr Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health, jointly with Dr Prakrit Vathesatogkit from Thailand for his work in tobacco control.

Professor Haberal has provided innovative work in the fields of general surgery, organ transplantation and burn treatment in his native Turkey and other countries around the world. His distinguished career has included his leadership of a team that performed Turkey's first kidney transplant.

WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, commended Professor Haberal, adding that WHO “looks forward to pursuing its successful collaboration with pioneers like you, especially with a view to strengthening national capacities in organ transplantation and burn treatment”.

The Ihsan Doğramacı Family Health Foundation Prize is presented following consultation between WHO and the Foundation. The Foundation, established in 1980 to promote and raise the standard of family health, is named in honour of Professor Doğramacı, a paediatrician and child health specialist who was among the signatories of the WHO Constitution at the International Health Conference held in New York in 1946.

The Dr Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize is awarded to individuals, institutions, or governmental or nongovernmental organizations who have made an outstanding contribution to public health.

Named in honour of the late Dr Lee, a former WHO Director-General, the award is decided by a panel based on nominees presented by WHO Member States.

The Severe Hypothermia Treatment Centre has adopted a holistic approach to the treatment of severe hypothermia, which has contributed to understanding and treatment world-wide. In addition, the work of the Centre has increased social awareness about the risk of hypothermia – especially for people living in situations of homelessness or poverty.

On a recent visit to Poland, Dr Kluge spoke with personnel at the Severe Hypothermia Treatment Centre and recounted the extraordinary story of a 2-year-old child who, thanks to the Centre's breakthrough techniques, was saved following a case of severe hypothermia after being exposed to subfreezing temperatures.

Dr Kluge thanked the staff of the Centre for their work, adding: "Friends, this is a true miracle – blending medicine, science and technology with compassion and care.

"Quite possibly, this institution, created less than a decade ago, is the only one of its kind worldwide. By dedicating its services to an issue that is far too often neglected globally, the Severe Hypothermia Treatment Centre has proven itself worthy of Dr Lee's – and WHO's – vision of health for all."

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