

Dr. F. Ulrich Hartl

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Ulrich Hartl received his doctoral degree in Biochemistry from the University of Heidelberg. In 1985 he moved to the laboratory of Walter Neupert in Munich where he worked on the mechanism of protein transport into mitochondria, first as a post-doctoral fellow and then as a research group leader.

In 1988 Hartl initiated work that resulted in the demonstration, in cooperation with A. Horwich (Yale), of the basic role of molecular chaperones in protein folding. The period in Walter Neupert's department was interrupted by a stay in William Wickner's laboratory at UCLA, where Hartl worked on the mechanism of bacterial protein export. After returning to Munich In 1990 he received his Habilitation in Biochemistry from the University of Munich and soon after accepted an offer to join the faculty of Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York.

Between 1991 and 1997 Hartl investigated the mechanisms of protein folding in the bacterial and eukaryotic cytosol. He reconstituted the pathway of chaperone-assisted folding in which the Hsp70 and the GroEL chaperone systems cooperate and discovered that GroEL and its co-factor GroES provide a nano-cage for single protein molecules to fold unimpaired by aggregation. In 1993 Hartl was promoted to Full Professor with tenure, and in 1994 became an Investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. In 1997 he returned to Munich to head the Department of Cellular Biochemistry at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry (MPIB).

Hartl has received several national and international awards for his work on chaperone-assisted protein folding, including the Gairdner Award in 2004, the Ernst Jung Prize for Medicine in 2005, the Körber Award in 2006, the Wiley Prize in 2007, the Rosenstiel Award and Horwitz Prize in 2008 and in 2009, he received the Otto Warburg Medal of the GBM. This year, in 2010, he will receive the Dr. H.P. Heineken Prize for Biochemistry and Biophysics of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.