



DR. LAP-CHEE TSUI

b. 1950

Although many of us have heard of cystic fibrosis, a debilitating disease that affects its victim's lungs, Dr. Lap-Chee Tsui, the brilliant researcher who discovered the gene that causes the disease, is not well-known outside of the scientific community.

Tsui grew up in a little village on the Kowloon side of Hong Kong. Although he enjoyed exploring nature, Tsui did not think his future lay in science. In an interview, Tsui stated, "When I was young I dreamed of becoming a designer, an architect, for I really appreciate beautiful things. But in biology I also learned about many beautiful things, like the structure of living organisms." It wasn't until after he received his Ph.D. that he decided to study genetics. As a scientist, he drew all his own diagrams and slides.

Tsui received his B.Sc. and M.Phil. from The Chinese University of Hong Kong and his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh in the United States. He joined the Department of Genetics at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto in 1981, where he continued his ground-breaking research and teaching for over twenty years, until 1992. In 1989, he and his team identified the defective gene that causes cystic fibrosis. According to the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame, this was the "most significant breakthrough in human genetics in fifty years."

Tsui received many honours for his work, including Distinguished Scientist of the Medical Research Council of Canada, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and Honorary Fellow of World Innovation Foundation. He was awarded honorary degrees from University of Toronto, York University, University of Western Ontario, and St. Francis Xavier University. When Tsui, an Etobicoke resident, was inducted into the Hall of Fame, the Selection Committee stated: "Through his work, he has brought honour and distinction to Etobicoke."

Inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1989