

CCMB scientist, R Sankaranarayanan wins the Infosys Prize 2020 in life sciences



PC: Infosys Science Foundation

Dr Rajan Sankaranarayanan, Chief Scientist at CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) has won the prestigious Infosys Prize 2020 for the life sciences category. Dr Sankaranarayanan is a structural biologist who studies structures of proteins in cells. He has made seminal contributions in on how accuracy is maintained by cellular machinery while building proteins across evolution.

Proteins are made of amino acids. These amino acids are present in our bodies in two forms – D and L forms, each a mirror image of the other. However, if D amino acids are incorporated in proteins being built, it can lead to many deleterious effects. He has found mechanistic details of how such a fundamental process runs in our cells avoiding many possible errors.

The Infosys Prize endeavors to elevate the prestige of science and research in India and inspire young Indians to choose a vocation in research. It intends to celebrate success in research and stand as a marker of excellence in these fields. A jury, comprising eminent leaders in each of these fields, evaluates the achievements of the nominees against the standards of international research, placing the winners on par with the finest researchers in the world. The annual award honors outstanding achievements of contemporary researchers and scientists across six categories: Engineering and Computer Sciences, Humanities, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences, each carrying a prize of a gold medal, a citation and a purse of USD 100,000.

Dr Sankaranarayanan commented on the moment saying, “15 years back, when I proposed the question, people thought the question was non-existent. From then to now winning this prize, I feel having come a long way – thanks to all the support from family and colleagues.”

Dr Rakesh Mishra, Director, CCMB says, “Dr Sankaranarayanan is an extremely rigorous scientist, and is highly celebrated among his peers in India as well as internationally. All of us in the CCMB community are delighted at him winning the Infosys Prize this year.”

This was the second Infosys Prize winner from CCMB in life sciences in a row. In total, CCMB has hosted three Infosys Prize winners in the last decade.