

BILL BRYSON, WINNER OF THE 2004 AVENTIS PRIZES, PRESENTS PRIZE MONEY TO GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL

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American author Bill Bryson, winner of the 2004 Aventis Prizes For Science Books, is to donate his £10,000 award to Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity. In response to this generous gesture, the Aventis Foundation has announced that it would match Bill Bryson's donation with a further £10,000 gift to the hospital. Bill Bryson will be at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) on Wednesday 23 June at 10.00am to present the combined cheque to the hospital.

The Aventis Prizes For Science Books award ceremony, hosted by The Royal Society, took place on Monday 14 June with Bill Bryson winning the General Prize for 'A Short History of Nearly Everything' (Doubleday/Transworld) and Nick Arnold and Tony De Saulles picking up the Junior Prize for their 'Really Rotten Experiments' (Scholastic Children's Books).

Bill Bryson commented: "The Aventis Prizes were created to promote and celebrate popular science writing for adults and children. I felt that it was appropriate to donate my prize money to a cause which stands for the same principles; the promotion and advancement of scientific thought and progress. Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity is currently raising funds towards a new gene therapy centre at the Institute of Child Health, the hospital's research partner. I am thrilled that this donation will be used to help buy a piece of equipment for the new laboratories within the centre."

The new centre for gene therapy, due to open early next year, at the Institute of Child Health is being developed to help children who are born with defective or missing genes, which affects their immune system. Children who suffer from this condition become weak and will usually die without treatment. The new gene therapy is an alternative treatment for those children who are unable to have bone marrow transplants and so far six patients have been successfully treated with this new pioneering method.

Eugen Mueller from The Aventis Foundation commented: "We are delighted and overwhelmed by Bill Bryson's generous gesture with the donation of his prize money to the Great

Ormond Street Hospital. We felt that it was only appropriate to match his donation to this noble and worthy cause."

Lord May, President of the Royal Society commented: "We applaud the gestures by both Bill Bryson and the Aventis Foundation and are pleased the enhanced prize money is going to such an exciting new area of science"

The Aventis Prizes For Science Books 2004 are managed by The Royal Society, the UK national academy of science, and generously supported by the Aventis Foundation, a German charitable trust established by Aventis, a world leader in pharmaceuticals.

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Notes to Editors

Bill Bryson was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1951. He settled in England in 1977, and lived for many years with his English wife and four children in North Yorkshire. He and his family then moved to America for a few years but have now returned to the UK. He is the bestselling author of *The Lost Continent*, *Mother Tongue*, *Neither Here Nor There*, *Made in America*, *Notes From a Small Island*, *A Walk in the Woods*, *Notes From a Big Country*, *Down Under* and, most recently, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. He is also the author of the bestselling *African Diary* (a charity book for CARE International).

About The Royal Society

The Royal Society is an independent academy promoting the natural and applied sciences. Founded in 1660, the Society has three roles, as the UK academy of science, as a learned Society and as a funding agency. It responds to individual demand with selection by merit not by field. The Society's aims are to:

- strengthen UK science by providing support to excellent individuals
- fund excellent research to push back the frontiers of knowledge
- attract and retain the best scientists
- ensure the UK engages with the best science around the world
- support science communication and education; and communicate and encourage dialogue with the public
- provide the best independent advice nationally and internationally
- promote scholarship and encourage research into the history of science

For more information, visit the web site at www.royalsoc.ac.uk

About The Aventis Foundation

The Aventis Foundation is generously supporting the Aventis Prizes for Science Books.

The Aventis Foundation (www.aventis-foundation.org) is a German charitable trust established by Aventis, a world leader in pharmaceuticals. The Aventis Foundation serves to promote music, theatre, art and literature, projects in the social and political arena with a focus on healthcare, as well as science, research and higher education. It was established in 1996 as the Hoechst Foundation and was renamed the Aventis Foundation in 2000, following the merger of Hoechst, its founder, with Rhône-Poulenc which created Aventis. Aventis is a global pharmaceutical company that discovers, develops, markets and manufactures branded prescription drugs and human vaccines to protect and improve the quality of life of patients around the world. For more information visit the website at www.aventis-foundation.org and www.aventis.co.uk

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