Bhanu Pratap Jena, Ph.D., D.Sc. (Hon. Doc. Mult.) (Short Biography)

Prof. Jena was born in a small town in Orissa, India, on November 1, 1955, to Manju and Prafulla Jena. He spent his early childhood in several remote villages in Orissa, where his grandfather practiced medicine. His grandfather's dedication to medicine and service to humanity greatly influenced Prof. Jena to choose a career in the medical sciences. As a youth, he enjoyed volunteered community service, working on village farms, and had a great love for the outdoors. Fishing, hiking, and field trips were a great source of inspiration and joy to him. He majored in Chemistry, Zoology and Botany from BJB College in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India (B.Sc., 1975) and studied Zoology (Endocrinology) at Utkal University, Orissa, (M.Sc., 1978). He graduated top of his class in the entire university, graduating in the Masters program, and receiving the Prasant Ku. Memorial Prize and the Utkal University Gold Medal. In 1979, he married Mina Behura, who has been his best friend and companion. They have one child, their son Siddhartha, who is 14 years old.

Following four years of lectureship at various colleges in Utkal University (1978-82), in 1982 Prof. Jena received a teaching and research fellowship from Iowa State University, to pursue studies leading to a doctorate degree. In December 1988, he received his Ph.D. degree in Zoology (Molecular Endocrinology), along with the Research Excellence Award and the Humanitarian Award, from the President of Iowa State University. Following postdoctoral studies at Iowa State and Yale Universities (1988-1994), Prof. Jena joined the Department of Surgery and the Biomedical Engineering, at Yale, as an Assistant Professor. In 2000, he moved to the Department of Physiology, at Wayne State University School of Medicine, as a tenured full Professor, and Founder-Director of the Institute of NanoBioScience. Throughout his academic career, Prof. Jena has been extremely fortunate to have availed the opportunity to work with wonderful mentors, colleagues and students.

Prof. Jena's scientific contributions began in 1975 while a masters student in Zoology. His scientific enquiry on how cells secrete, led to an exciting journey that revealed the molecular machinery and mechanism of the process. In 1975, at the young age on 19, he published his first scientific paper on the role of hypothalamus in the regulation of pituitary hormone release (Prakruti, U.U. J. Sci. (12): 81-87, 1975 & Masters Thesis). In the early 90's he determined the involvement of protein tyrosine phosphatase in cell secretion (J. Biol. Chem. 266(27):17744-17746, 1991; Cell. Biol. Int. 21(8): 469-476, 1997), and in 1996 (Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci, USA. 94:316-321, published on-line 1996), he discovered the 'porosome', -the universal secretory machinery in cells. Secretion is responsible for numerous physiological activities in living organisms, such as neurotransmission and the release of hormones and digestive enzymes. Secretory defects in cells are responsible for a host of debilitating diseases. The discoveries by Prof. Jena provide the underlying molecular machinery and mechanism of cell secretion.

Besides his research activities, Prof. Jena has been intimately involved in the global promotion of science, education, and health. His efforts have helped in the establishment of the Asian Institute of Nano Science & Technology in South Korea, and the Nano Institutes in Georgia and Romania. His recent efforts are largely focused on establishing a consortium of local, national and international experts to confront several debilitating diseases indigenous to Asia and Africa, diseases that are well managed in developed countries.

Among the honors and awards Prof. Jena has received over the years are, the Swebelius Cancer Research Award, the Hallim Distinguished Award Lecture jointly with Prof. Ahmed H. Zewail (Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, 1999), the Sir. Aaron Klug Award, elected to the Korea Academy of Science & Technology in 2002, elected Member National Academy of Medicine, Romania in 2006; received the 2005 George E. Palade Gold Medal, elected to the Academy of Scholars, WSU in 2007; received the 2007 Basic Biological Science Research Award from the American Society of Animal Science; has received six Honorary Doctorates including one from Babes-Bolyai University, Romania, jointly with Professors George E. Palade (Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1974) and Günter Blobel (Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1999), and Distinguished Visiting Professorships from a number of academic institutions.