

THE ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES

transcribed by Schaefer Dendros, Improbable Research staff

Here are the acceptance speeches given by the 2014 Ig Nobel Prize winners. A few exceeded the one-minute time limit, a fact that was kindly brought to their attention by eight-year-old Miss Sweetie Poo.

PHYSICS PRIZE [JAPAN]

Awarded to Kiyoshi Mabuchi, Kensei Tanaka, Daichi Uchijima, and Rina Sakai, for measuring the amount of friction between a shoe and a banana skin, and between a banana skin and the floor; when a person steps on a banana skin that's on the floor.

Kiyoshi Mabuchi: [Holding up a banana] What is this?

Audience: "A banana."

Mabuchi: That's so! [Begins singing, with vim] Banana! Everybody knows... [NOTE: the transcriber had difficulty transcribing some of the song] ... Banana, banana, banana, why are you so slippery? ... [FURTHER NOTE: the transcriber had difficulty transcribing most of the song] ... It's a scientific thing! [The speech was terminated by Miss Sweetie Poo saying, "Please stop. I'm bored. Please stop. I'm bored. Please stop. I'm bored...."]

NEUROSCIENCE PRIZE [CHINA, CANADA]

Awarded to Jiangang Liu, Jun Li, Lu Feng, Ling Li, Jie Tian, and Kang Lee, for trying to understand what happens in the brains of people who see the face of Jesus in a piece of toast.

Kang Lee: I have a question for the audience. Have you ever seen the face of Jesus... on toast? No? Elvis on a tortilla? No? Or your Uncle Bob in the clouds? No? That's too bad. It's perfectly normal if you do. As our studies have shown, your brain is completely normal if you see nonexistent faces in everyday objects. In fact, if you don't, your brain may actually lack the essential ingredients for a vivid imagination. And I have some good news for you, for those without a good imagination. I just found out you can buy a Jesus toaster on eBay for just \$49.99. Thank you very much.

Neuroscience winner Kang Lee receives the Ig Nobel Prize from Nobel laureate Carol Greiner. Human Curtain Rod Fariba Houman assists. Photo: Mike Benveniste.



Physics Prize winner Kiyoshi Mabuchi. Photo: David Holzman.



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THE ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES [CONTINUED]

PUBLIC HEALTH PRIZE [CZECH REPUBLIC, JAPAN, U.S.A., INDIA]

Awarded to Jaroslav Flegr, Jan Havlíček, Jitka Hanušová-Lindová, David Hanauer, Naren Ramakrishnan, and Lisa Seyfried, for investigating whether it is mentally hazardous for a human being to own a cat.

Jaroslav Flegr: Good evening. It's a great pleasure and great honor for me that you have awarded our work on the parasite *Toxoplasma* on [inaudible] species of mammals. Namely on an interesting and common species of primate: man. From a scientific point of view, this discovery is not such a big deal. The manipulative activity of *Toxoplasma* was already described in mice, rats, and other rats and other mice. However, it could have other interesting, and maybe disturbing, practical implications of which I do not wish to speak today. But please do not eat soil-contaminated raw cats. I hope this award could bring to the attention of both the general and scientific public our discovery of [inaudible]. Therefore, and especially, my *real* important discovery, the theory of frozen evolution. Therefore, thank you, Ig committee, you, general public, and you, *Toxoplasma*, very, very much— [The speech was terminated by Miss Sweetie Poo.]

Naren Ramakrishnan: What do you call a situation in which a cat wins an Ig Nobel? A cat-a-strophe!

David Hanauer: But honestly, I've got to tell you I'm not lying when I say we're both feline furry excited right now by receiving this award. It feels really mice.

Naren Ramakrishnan: I think it will really cat-apult our work to greater recognition.

David Hanauer: When I first found this unusual link between cat bites and human depression, I mailed the literature to my colleague. I dropped it in the litter box. And I wrote: "Do you know about this association, or is it neuter you?" He read the litter, and opened his mouse wide in disbelief, and said—

Naren Ramakrishnan: You've cat to be kitten about this litter! Spayed it isn't so!

David Hanauer: But it turned out tabby true, and it made us ask ocelot of questions. Like: What could cause this?

Naren Ramakrishnan: The mystery cat-alyzed us to learn more, and s-purred us on to report it in the litter-ature. We pursued it with great doggedness.

David Hanauer: So the next time you hear the pitter-panther of little cat feet, give paws, and— [The speech was terminated by Miss Sweetie Poo.]



Public Health Prize co-winner Jaroslav Flegr finishes his acceptance speech, with assistance from Miss Sweetie Poo. Photo: David Holzman.



Public Health Prize winners Naren Ramakrishnan, David Hanauer, and Jaroslav Flegr receive the Ig Nobel Prize from Nobel laureate Rich Roberts. Human Curtain Rods Debra Wise and Fariba Houman assist. Photo: David Holzman.



Members of the Biology Prize-winning team demonstrate their work. Photo: Mike Benveniste.



Psychology Prize winner Peter Jonason. Photo: Mike Benveniste.



Attempting to demonstrate the research that led to the Art Prize, performing chemist Joost Bensen holds an ugly painting. V-Chip Monitor Melissa Franklin utilizes a sounding device to halt the demonstration. Photo: David Holzman.

BIOLOGY PRIZE [CZECH REPUBLIC, GERMANY, ZAMBIA]

Awarded to Vlastimil Hart, Petra Nováková, Erich Pascal Malkemper, Sabine Begall, Vladimír Hanzal, Miloš Ježek, Tomáš Kušta, Veronika Němcová, Jana Adámková, Kateřina Benediktová, Jaroslav Červený, and Hynek Burda, for carefully documenting that when dogs defecate and urinate, they prefer to align their body axes with Earth's north-south geomagnetic field lines.

Vlastimil Hart, Petra Nováková, Pascal Malkemper, Sabine Begall, Veronika Němcová, Hynek Burda (speaking in turns): Let's talk about a study that includes lots of shit—the opposite of this year's theme, food. Scientists discovered that dogs can sense the earth's magnetic field. Let's see how they figured it out. Here [gestures to colleagues demonstrating with props] is the coordinator of the study, with some of the dog-keepers. The dogs are off the leash, exploring a new territory. And here we have the principal investigator, truly blinded. He gathered the data, and sorted it according to the magnetic weather, afterwards. Look, under calm magnetic conditions, the dogs aligned their body axes approximately parallel to the magnetic field lines, when peeing or pooing. What happens when the magnetic field is shaky? Ah, the dogs seem to sense the small changes, and they align randomly. Clever dog! Truly. But did the scientist pick up all the shit, in the end? Yes—and here is the proof. [Sabine Begall took out a "poop bag" and handed it to Miss Sweetie Poo, who was fast approaching the lectern. Begall and her colleagues then hurled numerous similar bags into the audience. The bags contained detailed info about the study, along with chocolate bars.]

PSYCHOLOGY PRIZE [AUSTRALIA, U.K., U.S.A.]

Awarded to Peter K. Jonason, Amy Jones, and Minna Lyons, for amassing evidence that people who habitually stay up late are, on average, more self-admiring, more manipulative, and more psychopathic than people who habitually arise early in the morning.

Peter Jonason: I see this [the Ig Nobel Prize, which he was holding in his hand], and I don't know what the hell I'm going to do with it. I'm originally from Connecticut, but I live in Australia now, and I'm afraid I won't be able to get through customs with this thing. I'm glad that my university sent me here—so thank you to my university, but if I don't make it back to work, I might actually be arrested at the airport in Sydney. So, thanks to everyone here. And if you never see me again, I'll be stuck in jail in Australia. Thank you.

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THE ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES [CONTINUED]



Art winner Marina de Tommaso receives the Ig Nobel Prize from Nobel laureate Rich Roberts. Minordomo Chris Deter assists. Photo: Mike Benveniste.

ART PRIZE [ITALY]

Awarded to Marina de Tommaso, Michele Sardaro, and Paolo Livrea, for measuring the relative pain people suffer while looking at an ugly painting, rather than a pretty painting, while being shot [in the hand] by a powerful laser beam.

Marina de Tommaso: Art can reduce pain. It's an Italian way of life. If you have a headache, or low back pain, don't take pills. Go to a gallery, and look for a painting you like. For example, Botticelli is very good for teeth pain. Van Gogh is wonderful for back pain. In Italy we are also expert in forgetting pain for economical reasons. We have very beautiful artistic creations. Artists may not know it, but they may be very good doctors for pain. But they may also be terrible painkillers. Thank you.

MEDICINE PRIZE [U.S.A., INDIA]

Awarded to Ian Humphreys, Sonal Saraiya, Walter Belenky, and James Dworkin, for treating "uncontrollable" nosebleeds using the method of nasal packing with strips of cured pork.

Sonal Saraiya: The big "thank you" goes to all the cooking channels, and the number of hours we spend there, listening to "Bacon makes everything better!" And then you have a vegetarian like me—I don't know what to do with bacon. A bigger thank you, of course, goes to my grandma, with all those not-so-tasty pies, but her old wives' tale where she says, "Put pork on anything, and you'll be fine!" So, there you go. It seems to have worked well for us. Thank you for this wonderful prize. Whoever said that science was not fun?



Art Prize winner Sonal Saraiya delivers her acceptance speech. Keeper of the Mop Sophie Haas sweeps paper airplanes from the stage. Photo: David Holzman.



Majordomo Gary Dryfoos demonstrates the technique—inserting cured pork into a patient's nose—that was honored with the Medicine Prize. Photo: David Holzman.

ARCTIC SCIENCE PRIZE [NORWAY, GERMANY, U.S.A., CANADA]

Awarded to Eigil Reimers and Sindre Eftestøl, for testing how reindeer react to seeing humans who are disguised as polar bears.

Eigil Reimers: Working with reindeer, in the far north, Svalbard, 77 degrees north latitude, we registered a rather hostile meeting between the reindeer and a polar bear. We decided that that is something which is going on which has changed in the higher arctic during the last decade. There is more open water, and less ice, in the Arctic, and more polar bears on land, more frequent interactions. A peaceful interaction, or a predator-prey relationship? We decided to find out, and dressed in an outfit. It was not possible for the polar bear to distinguish, or for the reindeer to see that this is not a human—this had to be a polar bear— [The speech was terminated by Miss Sweetie Poo.]



Arctic Science winners Eigil Reimers and Sindre Eftestøl receive the Ig Nobel Prize from Nobel laureate Eric Maskin. Photo: Alexey Eliseev.



Arctic Science winners Sindre Eftestøl and Eigil Reimers finish their acceptance speech, with assistance from Miss Sweetie Poo. Photo: Alexey Eliseev.

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THE ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES [CONTINUED]

NUTRITION PRIZE [SPAIN]

Awarded to Raquel Rubio, Anna Jofré, Belén Martín, Teresa Aymerich, and Margarita Garriga, for their study titled “Characterization of Lactic Acid Bacteria Isolated from Infant Faeces as Potential Probiotic Starter Cultures for Fermented Sausages.”

The winners were unable to attend the ceremony; they delivered this speech via video.

Margarita Garriga: Many thanks for the prize! For centuries, cultures across the globe have relied on microbes to help create a great variety of food and drinks, like wine, yogurt, and salami. Microbes such as lactic acid bacteria are considered normal inhabitants of our gastrointestinal tract. As such, experts say that intestinal strains should preferably be chosen to be used as probiotics—probiotics that will ultimately improve our health. The question is: would intestinal bacterial be competitive in sausage fermentation, and produce a good product? If the answer is yes, we imagine a probiotic sausage as the vehicle for delivery of bacteria with beneficial health effects. During our research at IRTA, we isolated a lactic acid bacteria from infant feces—a non-aggressive way to obtain intestinal bacterial strains, and further purified for characterization and assessment of their fermentation ability. And guess what! Some strains succeeded. So in the future, we could see fermented sausages join the kingdom of dairy products as vehicles for probiotics. Why not give sausages a chance?



The Nutrition Prize winners could not travel to the ceremony. They delivered their acceptance speech via a short video prepared at their home institution in Spain. This still image is from that video.

The four Nobel laureates and keynote speaker (and 1995 Ig Nobel Nutrition Prize winner) Dr. Yoshiro Nakamats sample Spanish sausages, in honor of this year's Nutrition Prize-winning research. Photo: Mike Benveniste.

