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John Kappler, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Immunology and Microbiology and Interim Scientific Director of the Barbara Davis Center for Childhood Diabetes, has been awarded the prestigious Wolf Prize in Medicine in Israel this past weekend. Founded by Dr. Ricardo Subirana y Lobo Wolf and his wife Francisca, the Wolf Foundation awards prizes to outstanding scientists and artists ‘for achievements in the interest of mankind and friendly relations among peoples.’

The 2015 Wolf Prize in Medicine honors three immunologists for their contributions to the understanding of key antigen-specific molecules and their role in immune response in health and disease. Dr. Kappler and his wife Dr. Philippa Marrack, jointly lead the Kappler Marrack Research Lab at National Jewish Health. The $100,000 prize was divided between the Kappler Marrack team and Dr. Jeffrey Ravetch of Rockefeller University.

Drs. Kappler and Marrack have made numerous important discoveries regarding the functioning of the immune system. They were the first to isolate the T cell receptor. Together they have contributed extensively to our understanding of the nature of antigen processing and major histocompatibility complex (MHC)-restricted peptide presentation. They have explored positive and negative selection of T cells in the thymus, T cell superantigens and the evolutionarily conserved structural relationship between T cell receptors and MHC molecules.

For the past six years, Dr. Kappler has collaborated with investigators at the Barbara Davis Center on the nature of the peptide/MHCII complexes that drive islet autoimmunity leading to type 1 diabetes. In 2015 he was named the Interim Scientific Director of the Barbara Davis Center and has established the Dr. John Kappler Research Laboratory at the Center. In addition to his own research and providing scientific direction to faculty and staff, Dr. Kappler will play an active role in recruiting the permanent Director of the Division of Basic and Translational Research at the Barbara Davis Center.