

Simon Wain-Hobson- Biosketch



Simon Wain-Hobson comes from a family of artists and went into science in part to do something different! He obtained his DPhil in biophysics from the University of Oxford. During a post-doc at the Weizmann Institute in Israel he met his French wife and moved to Paris where he switched to human virology, working notably on the AIDS virus HIV, from the earliest hour. Being the first to publish its genetic map his group went on to show that it evolved from a chimpanzee

virus. They highlighted with exquisite precision the phenomenal genetic variation and rapid evolution of HIV. After more than 25 years work with the AIDS virus his group found a remarkable connection that allowed them to move into cancer research - cancer genomes harbor tens of thousands of mutations. The Pasteur group showed that humans encode a DNA mutator enzyme, APOBEC3A, which can mutate chromosomal DNA. It is now accepted that this enzyme is a human mutagen on a par with ultraviolet light and cigarette smoke. He is Professor at the Institut Pasteur and has published more than 200 papers. A member of the European Molecular Biology Organization, Academia Europaea, he is Director of the French papillomavirus reference laboratory. He won the André Lwoff prize in 1996 and Athena prize from the French Academy of Sciences in 2007 and is Officier de la Légion d'Honneur. He is presently Board Chair of the Foundation for Vaccine Research in Washington DC. He collects 18C English drinking glasses and publishes on the subject.