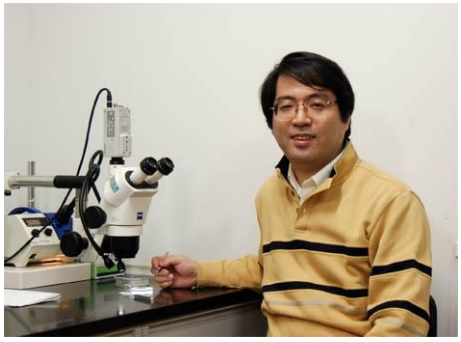
RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology (CDB)
2-2-3 Minatojima minamimachi, Chuo-ku, Kobe 650-0047, Japan

CDB Group Director Yoshiki Sasai receives Gold Medal Prize

June 11, 2009—On June 2, CDB Group Director Yoshiki Sasai was awarded the Gold Medal Prize by the Tokyo Techno Forum21. The prize was established in 1995 to recognize up-and-coming scientists who have made innovative achievements in their field. Sasai received the honor for "being the first to successfully generate the laminar cerebral cortical structure from human embryonic stem (ES) cells."



Sasai and his lab group engage in basic research on neural development using the African clawed frog, *Xenopus laevis*, as a model. They also apply their knowledge to attempt inducing neuralization from ES cells. So far, they have able to induce mouse—, monkey—, and human—derived ES cells to differentiate specifically into a range of neuronal cell types. The group also succeeded in inducing cortical cells from ES cells derived from mouse in 2005 and humans in 2007.

In 2008, the Sasai group developed a new cell culture method called serum-free culture of embryoid body-like aggregates for quick aggregation (SFEBq), and has gained recognition for in vitro generation of the four-layered structure, seen in the embryonic cortex, from mouse ES cells. This has been a huge achievement for developmental biology and regenerative medicine, as inducing ES cells to differentiate into different cell types that are capable of forming a functional, three-dimensional organization in vitro was considered to be a challenge.

Contact: Douglas Sipp sipp@cdb.riken.jp TEL: +81-78-306-3043
RIKEN CDB, Office for Science Communications and International Affairs