

Juhani Knuuti

The Pro Scientia prize is awarded by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters to a person or instance noted for speaking out, writing or engaging in other activities to the benefit of scientific study and research, thereby promoting the role of science in society. In 2023, the prize was awarded to MD and Professor Juhani Knuuti. The value of the prize is 10 000 euros.

Professor Juhani Knuuti works as the director and chief physician of the Turku PET Centre, a research institute operated jointly by the University of Turku, Åbo Akademi and Turku University Hospital.

Knuuti has especially studied blood circulation and metabolism of the heart muscle in relation to coronary artery disease and cardiac failure.

In addition to his successful career in research, Knuuti has gained renown as a staunch health educator and populariser and defender of science. Knuuti corrects erroneous and sometimes even untrue health-related claims in his presentations,

works, blogs and on social media. He has a popularising column called Tiede & Terveys [Science & Health] on the website of the newspaper *Turun Sanomat* and he writes on *Uusi Suomi*'s Puheenvuoro column platform. Furthermore, he also regularly contributes to other publications, such as the Professor Blog of the Finnish Union of University Professors.

"The importance of science is regularly emphasised in speeches. But it is the strong experience of scientists that science and especially the freedom of scientists must be constantly defended. At present, there seems to be considerable pressure to politically or ideologically control the choice of research topics. Objective criticism is an integral part of science. The problem, however, is that criticism, especially in social media, is largely irrelevant and superficial. One solution to this problem lies in the hands of scientists themselves: improving research communication. A good place to start is with the title and public description of the project. Researchers should consider

Juhani Knuuti is an extremely meritorious advocate of science.



what the public description looks like from outside their own scientific sandbox,” says Knuuti.

The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters considers Professor Juhani Knuuti to be an extremely meritorious advocate of science: Knuuti helps Finns find correct information. Bringing forth scientific knowledge in relation to various health-

related claims also helps to stabilise society.

The purpose of the Pro Scientia prize is to highlight such valuable work in the cause of science that is often easily overlooked by the media and the general public. Professor Knuuti’s work is an excellent example of selfless behaviour for the betterment of science and society.

Image: Mikael Soininen