

Media Release

World's largest vision award goes to Botond Roska and José-Alain Sahel

Basel, 15 September 2026 - Botond Roska, Director of Science at the Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology Basel (IOB), and José-Alain Sahel, University of Pittsburgh and Chair of the IOB Scientific Advisory Board, have been awarded the 2026 António Champalimaud Vision Award. Worth EUR 1 million, this is the largest award worldwide in the field of vision and ophthalmology. It marks a major international recognition of the research led by Roska and Sahel and, for IOB, of its mission to understand the mechanisms of vision and translate these discoveries into new therapies for vision loss.

The award recognizes more than two decades of fundamental, translational and clinical research by Roska and Sahel. Their work has helped establish new approaches to restoring visual function, particularly through optogenetic therapies, which aim to make surviving retinal cells responsive to light when the eye's natural photoreceptors have been lost through disease.

Botond Roska is a neuroscientist and one of the founding directors of IOB. His research has deepened our understanding of retinal function and opened new avenues for cell-specific therapies for retinal diseases. José-Alain Sahel is an ophthalmologist and clinician-scientist. He has pioneered therapeutic approaches spanning gene therapy, neuroprotection and vision restoration. Their long-standing collaboration has helped translate fundamental discoveries about retinal circuits into new therapeutic strategies and clinical research. In 2021, Roska, Sahel and their collaborators reported in *Nature Medicine* that an optogenetic approach could partially restore visual function in a blind patient with retinitis pigmentosa.

"I am very honored to receive this prestigious award together with José-Alain Sahel," says Roska. "It is an important recognition of our long-standing collaboration and, above all, a major support for our future research. It gives us the freedom to keep asking bold questions and to pursue new approaches to restoring vision."

The award funds will support the next phase of Roska and Sahel's research. With this distinction, Roska and Sahel join a distinguished group of António Champalimaud Vision Award laureates whose work has transformed the understanding, prevention and treatment of blindness and visual impairment.



About IOB

At the Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology Basel (IOB), basic researchers and clinicians work hand in hand to advance the understanding of vision and its diseases, and to develop new therapies for vision loss. IOB started its operations in 2018. The institute is constituted as a foundation, granting academic freedom to its scientists. Founding partners are the University Hospital Basel, the University of Basel and Novartis. The Canton of Basel-Stadt has granted the institute substantial financial support.

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