

KERALA

Kerala scientist does his bit for Nobel



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Collaborative work with laureate for medicine on the working of biological clock

As a scientist working on cutting edge technology, Shobi Veleri has always been understandably proud of his research output. But not in his wildest dreams did he imagine himself collaborating in a work that would go on to bag the Nobel Prize, 14 years later.

Dr. Veleri, now a DBT-Ramalingaswami Fellow at the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST), Thiruvananthapuram, is happy to have played a small but significant part in understanding the molecular mechanism that regulates the body's biological rhythm, the work that won the Nobel prize in Physiology or Medicine this year.

Last week, three American scientists, Jeffrey Hall, Michael Rosbach and Michael Young, were announced winners of the 2017 Nobel for their research work on the body's circadian rhythm and raising awareness about the importance of proper sleep hygiene.

In Germany

It was during his PhD work at the University of Regensburg, Germany, that Dr. Veleri had collaborated with Prof. Hall. The work which led to the discovery of a peripheral circadian clock in the brain of the fruit fly was published in 2003 with Dr. Veleri as lead author and Prof. Hall as senior author.

How the clock works

"The circadian clock is present in all organisms and regulates the routines in tune with the day-night changes of light on earth," explains Dr. Veleri. "Understanding the working of this biological clock will help us unravel the link to various behavioural disorders and diseases."

Dr. Veleri recalls Prof. Hall as a very unassuming personality and an avid reader of history with a passion for research. He also had numerous occasions to interact with Mr. Rosbach, who he describes as a gregarious personality with an uncanny power of imagination.

A native of Kozhikode, Dr. Veleri completed his M.Sc. in Physiology at the University of Calicut with a first rank and went on to join the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences, New Delhi, with a research fellowship from DRDO.

In 2000, he joined the University of Regensburg on a German government (DFG) fellowship.

Returning to India in 2005, he joined the Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences, Delhi. A year later, he was invited to join the National Institute of Mental Health, Washington, where he was involved in the study of the mechanism of general anaesthesia.

Dr. Veleri's continuing research is on decoding the genetic basis of inherited neural diseases in humans using genetic disease model systems.