



RESEARCH2REALITY

Shining a light on research & innovation.

From His Lab to Hundreds of Millions of Arms

An interview with **Drew Weissman**

2022 Canada Gairdner International Award laureate

My name is Drew Weissman. I'm the Roberts Family Professor of Vaccine Research at the Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania.

I've been working for the past over 25 years studying and developing mRNA. And the work that I did with Kati Karikó, we identified that RNA was inflammatory. We figured out how to make it not inflammatory. Then my lab developed it for vaccine use, which is currently what both COVID-19 vaccines by Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech use.

The true heroes are the people in my lab who do the work every day, and who have developed the vaccines and other therapeutics over the years.

You know, the people that have helped me the most in research are people like Ann Marshak-Rothstein, who I did my PhD with, and Tony Fauci, who I did my fellowship research with, who really taught me how to be a good researcher.

My wife and kids are high up on that list. They will tell you that I'm not an easy person to live with. But they've been incredibly supportive through all of this. They've made my research possible by, you know, their support, their caring, their help.

TODAY'S RESEARCH. TOMORROW'S REALITY.



The Gairdner Award is an incredible honour to receive, to be among that list of incredibly well-known, productive, and ingenious researchers. The money will go for basic science research, so it'll support new research. It'll support young researchers who want to try out new ideas or new approaches.

I don't like attention. I don't like being put out in the front of anything. I'm happy sitting in my lab working. That's where I'm at my happiest.

It's fantastic to see something that you've worked your life on be used, and to help the world. That's just a feeling that I never thought would happen, and I still haven't figured out how to fully process it. But it's an incredible feeling, and it's just so happy that we've been able to help with this pandemic.