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## McGovern Institute's Ann Graybiel Wins Ibsen Foundation's 2005 Neuronal Plasticity Prize

**CAMBRIDGE, MA — MAY 11, 2005** — Ann Graybiel, a Principal Investigator at the McGovern Institute and Walter A. Rosenblith Professor for Neuroscience at MIT, is receiving the 2005 Ibsen Neuronal Plasticity prize for "outstanding work...in the domain of Motivation and Associative Learning." Awarded by the French Fondation IPSEN pour la Recherche Thérapeutique, the prize recognizes researchers who shed light on the brain's plasticity, which refers to its physical remodeling in response to experiences, learning, and behavior.

The Ipsen committee lauded Graybiel's pioneering basic research on the basal ganglia, a poorly understood neuronal circuit connecting several brain regions in the striatum. The basal ganglia are known to be involved in neurological diseases, like Parkinson's and Huntington's, and neuropsychiatric disorders, like obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, and addiction. Graybiel has found that the basal ganglia also function in learning habitual actions and procedures. Graybiel is investigating the relationship of these functions using neuronal recordings and genetic analyses.

She discovered a high degree of plasticity during habit and procedure learning, and hypothesizes that the brain "chunks" the separate pieces of the learning process together into a higher-order representation that can be recalled as an entirety, without thinking, as if on autopilot. Her lab has cloned a novel gene that affects these behaviors, which is enabling her to explore the basal ganglia's role in dysfunctions involving repetitive behavior, pattern generation, and movement.

"Dr. Graybiel's landmark discoveries about the critical role of the basal ganglia in learning, motor control, and cognition are the foundation of what will be a new era in therapeutic approaches to basal ganglia disorders," says Robert Desimone, Director of the McGovern Institute. "These disorders are now implicated in a very wide range of both neurological and psychiatric disease affecting millions of Americans."

Graybiel shares the 40,000 euros prize with Trevor Robbins and Wolfram Schultz, both at the University of Cambridge, UK.

### **About the McGovern Institute at MIT**

The McGovern Institute at MIT is a research and teaching institute committed to advancing human understanding and communications. Led by a team of world-renowned, multi-disciplinary scientists, **The McGovern Institute** was established in February 2000 by Lore Harp McGovern and Patrick McGovern to meet one of the great challenges of modern science - the development of a deep understanding of thought and emotion in terms of their realization in the human brain. Additional information is available at: <http://web.mit.edu/mcgovern/>