

# Doctor who studied short children to be awarded Israel Prize

By *Eitan Bekerman*

Professor Zvi Laron will be awarded the Israel Prize for Medical Research at Jerusalem's International Convention Center this evening.

Laron is a professor of pediatric endocrinology at Tel Aviv University and Director of the Endocrinology and Diabetes Research Unit at Schneider Children's Hospital in Petah Tikva. He was recognized for his groundbreaking studies on growth hormone activity, which influenced the treatment of short children. His findings were and are considered medical milestones to this day.

Laron, 82, has recently been researching the effect of viral epidemics on the development of diabetes, his specialization, in juveniles.

After finding that more children who suffered from diabetes were born in certain months of the year, Laron became convinced that the pancreas' destruction process begins in the womb, when it is attacked by certain viruses.

Exposure to certain environments during childhood may lead to the development of clinical diabetes in children with a genetic susceptibility to the disease, he said.

Laron says that the connection between the season of birth and exposure to viral infections and the risk of developing autoimmune diabetes can lead to the development of preventive measures against the disease. Once there is clinical evidence of the disease, it is too late to

prevent it.

At most, patients can be given treatment to help them control their blood sugar levels.

Laron is married to Tova Laron and the father of four. He has been working, studying and writing incessantly for more than 50 years.

"Even when I retired I didn't leave the hospital for a single day. I go to many conferences, I lecture a lot. Now I'm writing another book. I manage to read the morning paper at night, if I have any time," he said.

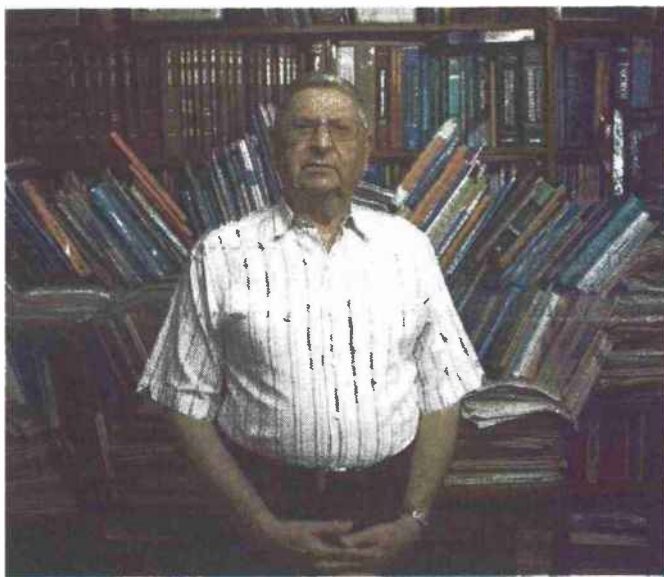
Laron was born in Romania in 1927 and began his medical education at the medical school in Timisoara.

In 1948 he moved to Israel and graduated from the Hadasah Hebrew University Medical School in Jerusalem in 1952.

In 1956-1957 he was a research and clinical fellow in pediatrics at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston.

From 1958 to 1992 Laron served as Director of the Institute of Pediatric and Adolescent Endocrinology at Beilinson Medical Center in Petah Tikva. From 1983 to 1997 Laron held the Irene and Nicholas Marsh Chair in Endocrinology and Juvenile Diabetes at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University.

The Laron syndrome, or Laron-type dwarfism, is a disorder caused by a variant of the growth hormone receptor that causes short stature.



Yanai Yehiel

Professor Laron at his Ramat Gan home this week.