Biography of Professor Claude M Wischik

Chair in Mental Health, University of Aberdeen
Chairman TauRx Therapeutics and WisTa Laboratories

Claude Wischik was born in France, and grew up in Australia. He finished High School in Adelaide, South Australia, went on to study mathematics and philosophy at the University of Adelaide, and then medicine at Flinders University of South Australia, where he graduated with First Class Honours.

After finishing medical school in 1980, he travelled to Cambridge UK with a Commonwealth Scholarship to undertake a PhD under the direction of the late Professor Sir Martin Roth who had made major contributions to research in Alzheimer's disease by providing the first evidence that the tangle pathology originally discovered by Alzheimer was highly correlated with clinical dementia.

At Roth's instigation, Wischik began a research project with Sir Aaron Klug at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB) in Cambridge to discover the structure of the paired helical filament (PHF) of which the Alzheimer tangle is composed. This work with collaborators at the LMB led to the first demonstration that the PHF is a *de novo* polymer composed predominantly of a short fragment of the microtubule associated protein (tau). This work also lead to the discovery that it was possible to dissolve PHFs isolated from the Alzheimer's brain with pharmaceutically viable compounds which act as Tau Aggregation Inhibitors (TAIs).

During this time, Wischik was a Meres Senior Student at St. John's College Cambridge, and a Lister Institute Research Fellow. He completed specialist training in Psychiatry at Cambridge, and was Director of the Cambridge Brain Bank Laboratory. He was also a research consultant to the then Zeneca Pharmaceuticals in the US, and later to Hoffmann la Roche in Switzerland.

Wischik moved with his team to take up a Chair in Mental Health at the University of Aberdeen in 1997. Here the team perfected high throughput *in vitro* screens for TAIs and other protein aggregation inhibitors, and developed robust cell-based models of protein aggregation which could be used in secondary screening for drug discovery. In collaboration with Professor Franz Theuring at the Charite Hospital in Berlin they developed a transgenic model of tau pathology based on the fragment first isolated from the PHF. Compounds shown to have efficacy in the *in vitro* screens were shown to have efficacy on behaviour and pathology in two different tau transgenic mouse models.

In 2002, Wischik cofounded TauRx Therapeutics with the late Dr K M Seng as a Singapore incorporated company with the aim of discovering novel approaches to the treatment and diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Wischik is the Chairman of TauRx, which undertakes clinical development and commercialisation, and of WisTa Laboratories which owns and manages the discovery platform. Research and development is undertaken in Aberdeen, Berlin, Warsaw and Singapore, and the company management is based in Singapore.

Wischik is happily married to a teacher and has three sons who have also distinguished themselves academically. He lives in Aberdeen, Scotland. Until recently, he practiced as an honorary consultant in Old Age Psychiatry. His other interests include sailing and hill walking.