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Research on thirst wins 2020 Eppendorf & Science prize

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The American scientist Christopher Zimmerman, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Fellow at the Princeton Neuroscience Institute in Princeton, New Jersey, USA has won the 2020 Eppendorf & Science Prize for Neurobiology for his work on the neural circuits that govern thirst and drinking behavior.

Zimmerman discovered that sensory signals originating throughout the body come together within individual neurons in the brain to produce the sense of thirst. He demonstrated that this new class of body-to-brain signals predicts changes in hydration before they occur and, as a result, adjusts our level of thirst preemptively. Zimmerman's research has revealed fundamental principles of ingestive behavior of foods and liquids, and provided neural mechanisms to explain aspects of everyday human experience.

"Christopher Zimmerman described in an engagingly written essay the neurobiology that underlies a phenomenon everyone has experienced multiple times," explained Dr. Peter Stern, Senior Editor at Science and Chairman of the Prize Jury. "The work helps us understand, for example, how we can quickly feel thirst, how the sensation changes during meals, and why cold drinks have a thirst-quenching power."

"I'm excited and honored to receive the Eppendorf & Science Prize for Neurobiology," said Zimmerman. "The prize will bring incredible exposure and recognition for my research at this crucial stage in my career."

"Eppendorf wants to reward and highlight the work of young, early-career scientists who are doing exceptional research in neurobiology," stated Eva van Pelt, Co-CEO of Eppendorf AG. "Our past winners have gone on to run incredibly successful labs of their own and have become the opinion-leaders in their field."