

Leaders in Cardiovascular Research: Thomas Lüscher

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Q: What is important for success—is it ambition or talent?

I always use the example of a pianist, Martha Argerich, versus a piano teacher and I then ask: ‘what is the difference between the two?’.

Of course, Martha Argerich may have more talent, but the major difference that research actually showed is that she trains more than 8 h a day. So, it is this 10 000-h rule that Malcolm Gladwell popularized. I would say if you are talented, that is good, but it is not good enough. In the first 10 years of your career, there is no life/work balance.

Q: What has been the most important step in your career?

I think the most important step was to find a place to get proper research training when I first went to the USA. I bought a plane ticket and visited nine places in the USA then at the last minute I also visited the Mayo Clinic. I met a Belgian Professor, Paul Vanhoutte, who told me all about blood vessels and these



Biography: Professor Thomas F. Lüscher is the Director of Research, Education & Development and Consultant of Cardiology at the Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospital Trust and Imperial College in London. He is also Director of the Center for Molecular Cardiology at the University Zurich (Campus Schlieren), as well as Editor-in-Chief of the *European Heart Journal*.

endothelial cells that cover them. I thought this was very interesting and, since blood vessels are everywhere, it must be very important. So, I went to the Mayo Clinic and have had a very good time ever since.

Q: What do you think the role of a mentor is for young scientists nowadays?

It is absolutely crucial in our time that we need good role models, and this has become more and more difficult with the current culture. I think you need a role model that tells you how to become successful, that you admire, that you learn from and so I always give the advice that you have to select the right institution and the right person. Again, when I went to the USA, I was looking at what they publish, but also whether the person in charge is at the end of the authors list or at the front. I think a good mentor should soon become the last author and allow fellows to be first and help them to develop their own career. Eventually, everyone benefits from this strategy.

Q: Which of your contributions to cardiovascular science throughout the years do you consider to be the most important?

When I started to work on endothelial research in the late 80s, just a few people were doing that. So whatever we did was new. We looked at endothelial dysfunction in renal disease with cyclosporine, with hypertension, with oxidized

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LDLs. . . you name it. And I think then we really could show the potential of this new concept. We were able to quite quickly look at humans, at patients and at healthy people with flow mediated vasodilation in the forearm. I think that really made a difference for me.



Q: Doing both basic science and clinical research, what is your advice for a successful translational science career?

I wanted to understand mechanisms. Sometimes you can do this much better in animal models, but eventually you have to show that this is important for humans because, indeed, only a maximum of 75% of genes are conserved from mice to humans. There is always a challenge to show that it can translate and work in humans as well. This is why we went to the operating theatre to obtain human blood vessels to show that this also works. You have to be persistent.

Q: What were the major challenges that you faced when taking over *European Heart Journal*? What was your source of success?

*In my time as the European Editor for *Circulation*, I learned a lot about how to run a journal, and also the concept of having sub-specialty journals. Initially I felt this was a bit crazy, but then I noticed that this is really something we should do. When they announced the *European Heart Journal* editorship, I was not sure whether I should do it but then a lot of my colleagues in the department felt we should try to.*

Q: Do you find the role of Editor-in-Chief mostly challenging, mostly enjoyable—or both?

In general, I find it enjoyable. Of course, you have to build it into your life. I cannot have vacations where I can just shut down for 3 weeks. That is, today, impossible. However, I was always able to fit it in to my daily life and so it went pretty smoothly. Of course, what is truly important is the editorial team. We have really a fantastic editorial team. When you are successful, they are also excited and they work even harder for you. I think that it was really crucial to us to have people that help you to run it that are very reliable and reachable all the time. Some of my collaborators, they answer emails all the time and also on weekends—and that was essential for success, I think.



Q: Lastly, the role of Editor-in-Chief can be time-demanding, how do you relax and recharge?

When I relax, I write something. I wrote two books on the philosophy of science and medicine, mainly written in German because my English is not always perfect. I read a lot of books about questions of the value of how science works. I also wrote some editorials, with great pleasure, on what is science, how does evidence evolve and how does it disprove itself. I admire Sir Karl Popper and many of these new philosophers, as well as Immanuel Kant, and this is what I really like to read as well.