Cancer Research salutes the 1987 winners of the General Motors Awards for major improvements in treatment, prevention, and understanding of cancer. Awarded on June 1 at ceremonies in Washington, DC, each prize carried a sum of $130,000 and a suitably inscribed medal.

The Charles S. Mott Prize for noteworthy contributions to preventing cancer and understanding its causes was shared by R. Palmer Beasley, who first conclusively linked liver cancer in Taiwan with the hepatitis B virus, and Jesse Summers, who clarified the genetic structure of this virus and demonstrated its carcinogenicity in animals. Beasley is professor and chief of the Division of Communicable Diseases at the University of California at San Francisco and director of the Medical Research Unit in Taipei. Summers is a senior member at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

The Charles F. Kettering Prize for clinical advances against cancer went to Basil I. Hirschkowitz for creation of the first flexible fiberoptic endoscope, an instrument that has revolutionized the diagnosis and treatment of several diseases, including cancer. He is professor of medicine and physiology and director of the Division of Gastroenterology at the University of Alabama Medical School in Birmingham.

Robert G. Weinberg, professor of biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a member of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, was the recipient of the Alfred P. Sloan Prize, awarded for seminal contributions to a better understanding of cancer. His pioneering work resulted in the discovery of oncogenes, one of the landmarks of modern cancer research.

Joseph G. Fortner, president of the General Motors Cancer Research Foundation, in announcing these awards, stated, “this year’s winners represent the best in cancer science. These prizes demonstrate once again that truly important discoveries are being made and that we are moving closer to the ultimate prevention and cure of this disease.”

Pictured are, clockwise from top, Weinberg, Summers, Hirshkowitz, and Beasley. We are indebted to Fred Nowicki of the General Motors Cancer Research Foundation for the information and photographs.

Sidney Weinhouse