Susumu Tonegawa Encyclopedia Article

Susumu Tonegawa

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Susumu Tonegawa

1939-

Japanese molecular biologist who made important discoveries relating to the immune system and its genetics. In 1976 Tonegawa reported that the genes responsible for antibody production moved physically closer to one another on their respective chromosomes. This suggested that the immune system is able to produce antibodies against new and novel invaders more quickly by forming efficient recombinations of existing genetic information and patterns. Tonegawa's research provided new insight into the workings of the immune system, for which he was awarded the 1987 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.