



## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Johannes D. Veldhuis '74g



### To Dr. Johannes Veldhuis for achieving international prominence in endocrine research and teaching.

Renowned Mayo Clinic endocrinologist Johannes Veldhuis and his team could find the key to reversing the effects of aging or at least slowing the process. For more than 20 years, Veldhuis has studied the complex interaction between the pituitary gland, growth hormone levels, and the shrinking muscles and expanding midsections associated with aging.

A noted and prolific researcher, Veldhuis currently has 15 active studies funded by National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants and has had his work published in countless articles in prestigious journals, including the highly-respected *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*. He has also supervised dozens of research fellows, collaborated with visiting scientists, served on a wide range of doctoral thesis committees, and contributed his expertise to the editorial boards of the top journals in endocrinology and other fields.

Veldhuis' work has been recognized with many awards, including the National Center for Research Resources, National Institutes of Health, General Clinical

Research Center Annual Outstanding Clinical Investigator Award (1998), and the Mayo Lifetime Research Award (2006). Penn State previously honored Veldhuis in 1984 with the Alumni Fellow Award.

Veldhuis joined the Mayo Clinic and Mayo Medical and Graduate Schools of Medicine as professor of medicine, consultant, and clinical investigator in 2002. Before that, Veldhuis spent 21 years at the University of Virginia Health Sciences Center, rising to the rank of professor of internal medicine and director of the University of Virginia's General Clinical Research Center. Veldhuis started his career as an assistant professor of internal medicine at the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in 1979.

In 1970, Veldhuis entered Penn State's new medical school after just three years as a German, chemistry, and math major at Rockford College in Illinois. As an admittedly "restless student," Veldhuis had taken the MCAT as a sophomore. Three medical schools had already accepted him when he interviewed for a spot at Penn State's College of Medicine in Hershey. Veldhuis asked the three doctors interviewing him which textbook

they used. They said most medical textbooks at that time were outdated, and they preferred handouts and lectures that reflected the latest in medical knowledge. "I knew right then I wanted to go there, and I told them I'd even wait a year if I had to," he recalled. He didn't have to wait. Penn State accepted him a year shy of his bachelor's degree, and he graduated at the top of his class four years later.

Entering medical school early was only the latest chapter in Veldhuis' unconventional education. As a child, he lived in Dutch New Guinea—now Papua and West Papua—where his father was a missionary. Other missionaries home schooled Veldhuis, and he also completed correspondence courses. "I spent the rest of the time chasing tropical birds and reading Dickens and other classics," he said.

The family returned to Canada, and Veldhuis, now in seventh grade, entered a school building for the first time. His family later moved to Florida, where he graduated as valedictorian of his high school class. A clerical error on his transcript derailed his plans to attend the University of Florida. Instead, he

headed north to Rockford College and, ultimately, to Penn State's College of Medicine. After graduating from Penn State with his M.D., Veldhuis was a resident in internal medicine at the Mayo Clinic. He then returned to Penn State and The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center for a clinical endocrinology fellowship. Veldhuis also completed an NIH-sponsored Individual National Research Service Award fellowship.

One of his mentors at Penn State was Cheston Berlin, recipient of numerous awards including Penn State's Honorary Alumni Award in 2008. "He's a mensch," Veldhuis said of Berlin. "He's just a gracious man who can cut to the point in medicine and is so encouraging to students."

Veldhuis and his wife, Marcia, live in Rochester, Minn. They have five grown children.

