Founders’ Award – Gavril Pasternak Dr. Gavril Pasternak holds the Anne Burnett Tandy Chair in Neurology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and is a Laboratory Head in the Molecular Pharmacology and Chemistry Program within the Sloan-Kettering Institute. After receiving his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from the Johns Hopkins University he completed his clinical training in Neurology at Johns Hopkins Hospital and then joined the faculty at Memorial Sloan-Kettering in 1979. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Neurology and a Fellow of the American Neurological Association. His research has focused on opioid receptors and their mechanisms of action, with over 400 publications. He has served on the Editorial Boards of numerous scientific journals. He is a recipient of a Senior Scientist Award and a MERIT Award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and has served on their Board of Scientific Counselors. He is a member of the Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars and has been awarded the Millenium Prize from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, the John J. Bonica and the Raymond W. Houde Awards from the Eastern Pain Association, the Julius Axelrod Award of the American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, the S. Weir Mitchell Award from the American Academy of Neurology. He has been honored with the 2014 William Potter Lecture at Thomas Jefferson University, the 6th Donald W. Benson Lectureship on Pain Medicine at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, the 1st Annual Machaskee Memorial Lectureship at the Cleveland Clinic and the Stitzel Lecture at West Virginia School of Medicine.

Comments about Dr. Pasternak from the Selection Committee:
Dr. Pasternak is recognized for his major contributions to the differential roles of opiate receptor subtypes in relieving pain with diminished side effects. Over the years his research has focused upon the characterization of opiate receptors. Using both ligand binding and molecular biological techniques, Dr. Pasternak has uncovered several novel receptors derived by alternative splicing of the mu opiate receptor gene. His discoveries have significantly increased our understanding of how opiates act and have led to novel, potent analogs with reduced side effects. Also, in his recent research Dr. Pasternak has discovered some new selective opioid drugs that are much more potent than morphine with diminished adverse effects with less potential for causing physical dependence. Dr. Pasternak has been a frequent attendant at the INRC meetings throughout his career and together with his students and collaborators provided important contributions to our organization.

Young Investigator Award – Grégory Scherrer Dr. Grégory Scherrer received his PhD in Molecular and Cellular Biology from Strasbourg University in 2005 under the supervision of Dr. Brigitte Kieffer. In 2006 he joined Dr. Allan Basbaum’s laboratory at UCSF for his postdoctoral training. From 2009-2012 he continued as a postdoctoral fellow with Dr. Amy MacDermott at Columbia University in NYC. In 2012 he started his own research laboratory at Stanford University as a faculty member of the Neurosciences Institute and the Departments of Anesthesiology and Molecular and Cellular Physiology. His laboratory combines a variety of experimental approaches including molecular and cellular biology, neuroanatomy, electrophysiology, opto-pharmacogenetics and behavior in mouse to resolve the functional organization of pain neural circuits in normal conditions and during injury- or disease-induced chronic pain, and how opioids modulate neuronal function to produce analgesia and detrimental side effects. A major goal of the Scherrer laboratory is to use novel insights into opioids’ mechanisms of action develop more efficacious and safer therapeutics to treat patients suffering from pain.

Comments about Dr. Scherer from the Selection Committee: While working on his thesis, conducted under the supervision of Dr. Brigitte Kieffer, Dr. Gregory Scherrer studied the role of delta opioid receptor (DOR) in pain control, emotional response and cognitive process utilizing advanced techniques, including molecular biology and transgenic animals. Upon obtaining his PhD, he then moved to San Francisco to work with Professor Alan Basbaum at UCSF to conduct studies on the function and anatomical localization of DOR in pain processing pathways. During a post-doctoral period with Dr. Amy MacDermott, he focused on the organization of neuronal circuits that are regulated by opioids in the spinal cord. Upon finishing his work at Columbia he was recruited by Stanford University as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anesthesiology where, Greg continues his research on cellular and molecular mechanisms of pain and its control by opioids. Since the beginning of his career, Dr Scherrer’s research has been original and important, resulted in several publications in high impact journals such as PNAS, PLoS One, Pain and Cell, and led to the awarding of a competitive Pathway to Independence (K99/R00) Award from NIDA to examine the analgesic actions of opioid peptides in chronic pain. Over the years Dr. Scherrer has been a regular attendee at INRC meetings and has contributed excellent science related to our organization.