

# NEWS

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מכון ויצמן למדע

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**DATE:** Rehovot, Israel, November 5, 2018  
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## **Prof. Alon Chen Elected Next President of the Weizmann Institute of Science**

The Executive Board of the Weizmann Institute of Science, headed by Shimshon Harel, announced they have elected Prof. Alon Chen to be the 11<sup>th</sup> President of the Weizmann Institute of Science. The Board accepted the recommendation of the Presidential Search Committee, headed by the Chair of the International Board of the Institute, Prof. Jehuda Reinharz. Out of several candidates presented to the search committee, its members unanimously voted to put forward Prof. Chen's name for the position.

Prof. Chen will take office on December 1st, 2019, when the current president, Prof. Daniel Zajfman, who took office in 2006, will complete his term.

Prof. Chen is a neuroscientist and head of the Neurobiology Department at the Weizmann Institute of Science, as well as a director at the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry in Munich, Germany. In addition, he heads a joint Weizmann-Max Plank lab for experimental neuropsychiatry and behavioral neurogenetics, as well as being an adjunct professor at the Ludwig Maximilian University Faculty of Medicine in Munich.

Prof. Alon Chen was born in Israel (1970). He received a BSc in life sciences, *magna cum laude*, from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 1995, and a PhD through a direct track from the Weizmann Institute of Science in 2001 (*magna cum laude*). In parallel, he attained an MBA from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. From 2001-2005, traveling on Rothschild and Fulbright scholarships, he conducted postdoctoral research at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, in San Diego, California. There he began to investigate processes in the brain that regulate mental stress and anxiety. Chen returned to the Weizmann Institute of Science in 2005 as a senior scientist in the Neurobiology Department. He was awarded an Alon Fellowship by the Israel Council for Higher Education – Israel's highest award for returning scientists. In 2012, Chen became an associate professor and, in 2017, a full professor.

In 2013, he was appointed a director in the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, and Head of the joint lab for experimental neuropsychiatry and behavioral neurogenetics.

In his research, Prof. Chen focuses on the biological processes by which stress and anxiety develop in our bodies, as well as the mechanisms in the brain that are activated by these mental states and which are meant to regulate them. His research also questions how these response mechanisms are over- or

under-activated in various psychiatric disorders. In the search for a basic understanding of how animals and humans respond to stress and anxiety, Chen and his colleagues have uncovered genes, proteins and neural circuits that play crucial roles in these phenomena. They have also discovered epigenetic (i.e., controlling gene expression, but not in the genes themselves) mechanisms and information processing circuits in the brain that are tied to anxiety, depression, eating disorders and metabolic syndromes.

In his current positions as head of the Neurobiology Department of the Weizmann Institute of Science and director in the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry, Prof. Chen has amassed a wealth of experience in management, especially in managing successful scientific research. This experience includes handling large budgets and obtaining resources; as well as working with scientific councils, executive boards, public authorities, scientific faculty and management, graduates, donors and stakeholders.

Prof. Chen is able to describe complex scientific processes in language that all can understand; he is a manager who encourages good team spirit in his workplace, and is a natural leader who knows how to identify opportunities and translate difficult challenges into novel solutions. Prof. Chen also invests his time and energy in scientific education and in making science accessible to the general public.

Prof. Chen is married with two children.

Following the announcement of his appointment, Prof. Chen addressed the members of the International Board, the members of the Executive Board, the Weizmann Institute of Science Faculty, staff and friends:

“I would like to thank the members of the Presidential Search Committee, the Weizmann Institute of Science International Board, the Institute scientists, its staff and friends for giving me the opportunity to take the reins of this leading scientific institution, to continue to reach new heights of excellence, and educational and scientific endeavor.”

*Prof. Alon Chen heads the Murray H. and Meyer Grodetsky Center for Research of Higher Brain Functions; the Nella and Leon Benozio Center for Neurosciences; the Gladys Monroy and Larry Marks Center for Brain Disorders; and The Norman and Helen Asher Center for Brain Imaging. His research is supported by the Perlman Family Foundation, founded by Louis L. and Anita M. Perlman; the Adelis Foundation; Mr. and Mrs. Bruno Licht; Sonia T. Marschak; and the Ruhman Family Laboratory for Research in the Neurobiology of Stress.*

For photos, or further information, please contact the Department of Media Relations, Weizmann Institute of Science: 3856-934-08 [News@weizmann.ac.il](mailto:News@weizmann.ac.il)

Read more about Prof. Alon Chen's research:

**[Please Ignore This Message: The Link between Pregnancy and Anorexia](#)**

**Stressed Out from Birth: Mice Exposed to Prenatal Stress Are Predisposed to Eating Disorders Later in Life**

**Keeping Up the Pressure**

**Less-Stress Neurons Identified**

**Tiny Molecule Could Help Diagnose and Treat Mental Disorders**

**New German-Israeli Laboratory Inaugurated at the Weizmann Institute**

**Turning off Stress**

The Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, is one of the world's top-ranking multidisciplinary research institutions. Noted for its wide-ranging exploration of the natural and exact sciences, the Institute is home to scientists, students, technicians and supporting staff. Institute research efforts include the search for new ways of fighting disease and hunger, examining leading questions in mathematics and computer science, probing the physics of matter and the universe, creating novel materials and developing new strategies for protecting the environment.

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