

# Courage for sound science wins John Maddox prize

Shi-min Fang and Simon Wessely win award for standing up for science in the face of attacks and death threats.

Richard Van Noorden

07 November 2012



A Chinese science writer who was physically attacked for his work exposing medical fraudsters and a British psychiatrist who has faced death threats for his work on chronic fatigue syndrome and mental health are the inaugural winners of a prize to reward people who overcome opposition to stand up for sound science.

Shi-min Fang, a freelance writer and former biochemist who exposes bad science on his New Threads website, and Simon Wessely, at the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London, were announced on 6 November as the winners of the [John Maddox prize](#), worth £2,000 (US\$3,200).

Fang was attacked by thugs in the summer of 2010 after criticizing the efficacy of a urologist's surgical procedure (see '[Brawl in Beijing](#)'). Wessely has developed therapies to treat chronic fatigue syndrome, but has been reviled by many with the disorder for emphasizing the syndrome's neuropsychiatric aspects, especially after it was linked to the XMRV virus (see '[Chronic fatigue syndrome: Life after XMRV](#)').

The prize is awarded by *Nature* and the London-based science advocacy charity, Sense About Science, with support from the Kohn Foundation in London. An Editorial in this week's *Nature* explains more about the award and its first winners (see '[John Maddox Prize](#)').

*Nature* | doi:10.1038/nature.2012.11760