

Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen Symposium



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Röntgen's Discovery: from Serendipity to Scientific Revolution

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On the eve of November 8, 1895 Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, then physics professor at the University of Würzburg, made a curious observation while performing experiments on gas discharges: a fluorescence screen lit up despite being well separated from the experimental set-up. This moment 125+1 years ago marks the discovery of X-ray radiation and eventually led to the first ever Nobel Prize in physics. This lecture will highlight Röntgen's interesting biographical background –almost impeding his academic career and with Zürich playing an important role in it –and provide an overview of the enormous impact that his discovery had on modern science and technology. Beyond their well-known use in medical diagnostics and therapy, X-rays find today widespread application in many diverse fields, ranging from materials science to astrophysics, from preservation of cultural heritage to molecular biology. They even play a key role in fighting the current corona virus pandemic.

Presenter: CLAESSEN, Ralph (University of Würzburg, Germany)