



Dr. Alex Matter Awarded 2013 Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research Targeted Cancer Therapy: New Paradigm for Treating Cancer

(Bethesda, Md. – January 29, 2013) - The National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) announced today that Dr. Alex Matter has been awarded the 8th *Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research* for his contributions to the development of the first drug specifically targeting a molecular lesion in cancer.

This first targeted cancer therapy, imatinib mesylate, or Gleevec, contributed to a major breakthrough in the treatment of Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia (CML), followed by its successful application to other malignant cancers by turning off the signal of the protein causing these cancers. With Gleevec, the outcome of treating CML went from the dismal and often deadly to a nearly 90% long-term survival with little or no side-effects.



Dr. Alex Matter's pioneering research in probing the molecular anatomy of tumor cells in search of cancer-causing proteins represents the start of a new era in cancer treatment: Gleevec was the first drug that translated the insights of molecular cancer biology into a highly effective anti-cancer drug, which offered proof that molecular targeting works in treating cancer.

The successful development of Gleevec led to a paradigm shift in new cancer treatments. The preclinical research led by Dr. Matter demonstrated that it is possible to counteract cancer by specifically inhibiting the activity of key oncogenic molecules, while the impact of the research discoveries was nothing short of phenomenal. Dr. Matter's research made it possible to turn deadly cancers into treatable diseases.

"Alex Matter is the father of targeted cancer therapies," said Chinese Minister of Health, Chen Zhu, M.D., Ph.D., winner of the 7th *Szent-Györgyi Prize* and Chair of the 2013 Prize Selection Committee. "Dr. Matter's leadership in building the synergy between pharmaceutical companies, universities, and research hospitals changed both the way we treat CML and our approach to developing new anticancer drugs."

"I am deeply honored to receive the 2013 *Szent-Györgyi Prize*," said Dr. Matter, CEO of the Experimental Therapeutic Centre of Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) in Singapore. "I am receiving this great honor on behalf of a wonderful and international team with whom I had the privilege to work over many years."

"Dr. Matter is a pioneer. Overcoming many barriers, he was able to translate the insights of molecular cancer genetics and tumor biology into a new approach for treating cancer. This was Albert Szent-Györgyi's vision," said Sujuan Ba, Ph.D., Co-chair of the 2013 *Szent-Györgyi Prize* Selection Committee and Chief Operating Officer of NFCR.

Dr. Matter will be honored at an award ceremony held April 5 at The National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

[About the Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research](#)

The *Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research* was established by the National Foundation for Cancer Research in honor of its co-founder, Albert Szent-Györgyi, M.D., Ph.D., recipient of the 1937 Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine.

The 8th Annual *Szent-Györgyi Prize* Selection Committee was chaired by Chen Zhu, M.D., Ph.D., and co-chaired by Sujuan Ba, Ph.D. Other selection committee members included leaders in cancer research and drug development from academic institutes and biotech and pharmaceutical industries: Webster K. Cavenee, Ph.D., Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Carlo M. Croce, M.D., The Ohio State University; Raymond DuBois, M.D., Ph.D., The Biodesign Institute at Arizona State University; Richard B. Gaynor, M.D., Eli Lilly and Company; Beatrice Mintz, Ph.D., Fox Chase Cancer Center; Richard O'Reilly, M.D., Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; Scott D. Patterson, Ph.D., Amgen, Inc.; Philip N. Tsichlis, M.D., Tufts University School of Medicine; Peter K. Vogt, Ph.D., The Scripps Research Institute; Wai-Kwan Alfred Yung, M.D., MD Anderson Cancer Center; Qimin Zhan, M.D., Ph.D., Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences; and General Secretary Yi Michael Wang, M.D., Ph.D., NFCR.



[About Alex Matter, M.D.](#)

Dr. Matter received his medical degrees from the Universities of Basel and Geneva, and completed his doctoral thesis at the Institute of Pathology at the University of Basel. He held fellowships at the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Swiss Academy for Medical Sciences. Alex Matter, M.D. is currently CEO of the Experimental Therapeutics Centre, A*STAR, Singapore, having spent five and a half years as Director of the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD), from October 2003 to February 2009. Prior to this role, Dr. Matter was Global Head of Oncology Research for Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, Head of Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research in Basel and Global Head of Translational Research.

Dr. Alex Matter previously held teaching positions at the University of Basel and the European University Confederation of Rhine. He has published more than 100 scientific articles, several book chapters in the area of oncology and hematology, and is emeritus Professor of the Medical Faculty of the University Basel and an Honorary Adjunct Professor of the Department of Pharmacology, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore.

Dr. Matter is a member of the American Association for Cancer Research, the National Medical Research Council in Singapore, and the Board of Curiox, a Singapore-based start-up company, and is also an elected member of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences. Dr. Matter is the recipient of the 13th Warren-Alpert prize and the AACR-Bruce F. Cain Memorial Award.

[About the National Foundation for Cancer Research](#)

The National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) is a leading charity dedicated to funding cancer research and public education relating to cancer prevention, earlier diagnosis, better treatments and, ultimately, cures for cancer. NFCR promotes and facilitates collaboration among scientists to accelerate the pace of discovery from bench to bedside.

Since 1973, NFCR has provided over \$300 million in direct support of discovery-oriented cancer research focused on understanding how and why cells become cancerous, and on public education relating to cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. NFCR scientists are discovering cancer's molecular mysteries and translating these discoveries into therapies that hold the hope for curing cancer. NFCR is about *Research* for a Cure—cures for *all* types of cancer. For more information, please visit www.NFCR.org.