



4th Annual Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research Awarded to Ronald A. DePinho, M.D.

(March 10, 2009 – Bethesda, MD) -- The National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) announced today that Ronald A. DePinho, M.D. has been awarded the 4th Annual *Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research*. Dr. DePinho, Professor and Director, Belfer Institute, Department of Medicine and Genetics, Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School, won the prize for his groundbreaking discoveries regarding fundamental molecular and biological mechanisms governing cancer and aging. Dr. DePinho's research findings have resulted in advances across many areas of science and have culminated in several cancer drug discoveries.

The annual *Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research* was established by the National Foundation for Cancer Research to recognize outstanding scientific achievement in the war against cancer and to honor pioneering scientists who are making extraordinary contributions to the field of cancer research. The Prize is designed to draw attention to the continued need to support basic cancer research and the role that it plays in new cancer therapies. The Prize includes a \$25,000 cash honorarium.

"Dr. DePinho's research on genetic events in the life history of a cancer cell has advanced our understanding of cancer farther than almost any scientific work in this decade. His work will continue to provide the platform for discoveries and developments for many years and represents a significant leap forward in our understanding of the nature of cancer," said Carlo M. Croce, M.D., Chair, 4th Annual Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize Selection Committee and last year's Prize winner.

"The significance of Dr. DePinho's research is remarkable, and the impact of his discoveries on our basic understanding of cancer development in the aging population is immense," said Sujuan Ba, Ph.D., Co-Chair of the 4th Annual Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize Selection Committee and Chief Operating Officer of NFCR. "We are quite pleased to honor him and celebrate his work in advancing cancer research."

Dr. DePinho's research on the life history of cancer cells helped form the basic understanding of how developing cancer cells reach their fatal destination. His work recognized that p53 gene functions as a tumor suppressor via activation of the apoptosis pathway during abnormal cell cycling. His studies demonstrated that INK4a/ARF is a true tumor suppressor and that ARF is linked genetically and biochemically to the p53 pathway.

His facile use of mouse models was most notably demonstrated in his experiments of inducible oncogenes where he established the concept of “tumor maintenance”. This experimental model addressed the relevance of oncogenes in the fully established cancer albeit with many additional alterations. These experiments and concepts laid the foundation for use of the inducible cancer model in both research and industry for the exploration of host-tumor interactions and identification of validated drug targets and biomarkers.

Dr. DePinho’s discoveries have illuminated the intimate link between advancing age and cancer – a lasting mystery for the cancer field. He has convincingly established that telomere dysfunction, combined with an impaired DNA damage response, and the continual renewal of epithelium by aging or disease processes, converge to form the common carcinomas. These discoveries have paved the way for the discovery of new cancer genes and the development of agents in clinical trials – including the use of telomerase inhibitors in cancer.

Today, Dr. DePinho is the Director of the Belfer Institute for Applied Cancer Science in the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute at Harvard Medical School and a Professor of Medicine and Genetics at Harvard. He has received numerous awards and honors including the Irma T. Hirschl Career Scientist Award, American Cancer Society Research Professorship, the American Society for Clinical Investigation Award, the Harvey Society Lecture, the Helsinki Medal, among others. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Dr. DePinho received his M.D. with distinction from Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, New York.

“I believe the ideals of this Prize are certainly important and Dr. Szent-Györgyi was so instrumental in highlighting the role of basic science in breaking apart cancer’s mysteries,” said Dr. DePinho. “Winning this Prize, named in his honor, means a great deal to me personally and I am humbled to have been selected by my peers to receive it and have my name added to the other winners whom I admire. It is my continued desire to see the discoveries I have advanced make a significant long-term impact on those patients who suffer from cancer. The support of the National Foundation for Cancer Research over the years both for this Prize and for basic cancer research has been a vital part of many significant research discoveries.”

The *Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research* was established by the National Foundation for Cancer Research in honor of its co-founder, Dr. Albert Szent-Györgyi, recipient of the 1937 Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine for his study on Vitamin C and cell respiration. Dr. Szent-Györgyi was a leading advocate for developing resources to provide scientists with the financial support necessary to pursue novel cancer research ideas. The award ceremony will be held in New York City, attended by a large number of cancer researchers, pharmaceutical and business leaders, including the Honorable Billy Tauzin, president of PhARMA and Professor Harold zur Hausen, 2008 Nobel Prize Winner in Medicine.

The 4th Annual Albert Szent-Györgyi Prize selection committee was co-chaired by Carlo M. Croce, M.D., and Sujuan Ba, Ph.D. Other selection committee members are the leaders in cancer research and drug development from academic institutes, pharmaceutical industry, and government agencies, included: Paul Fisher, Ph.D.; Richard Gaynor, M.D.; Doug Hanahan,

Ph.D.; Curtis C. Harris, M.D.; Richard O'Reilly, M.D.; Peter Vogt, Ph.D.; and Daniel Von Hoff, M.D. FACS.

About the National Foundation for Cancer Research

The National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) was founded in 1973 to support cancer research and public education relating to prevention, better diagnosis, new and more effective treatments, and ultimately cures for all types of cancer. NFCR promotes and facilitates collaboration among scientists to accelerate the pace of discovery from bench to bedside.

NFCR has provided over \$260 million in support of discovery-oriented basic research focused on understanding how and why cells become cancerous. NFCR's 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.

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