

Harald zur Hausen Is the New President of the German Cancer Aid

Professor Harald zur Hausen, former Scientific Director of the German Cancer Research Center for many years and 2008 Medicine Nobel Prize Laureate is the new president of the German Cancer Aid (Deutsche Krebshilfe). He succeeds Professor Dagmar Schipanski, whose tenure ends after a decade at the end of the year.

“I am deeply convinced of the importance of the Deutsche Krebshilfe and I am looking forward to this new task,” said the future president, Harald zur Hausen, after his election on 18th November 2009 at the general meeting of the German Cancer Aid.

“In Harald zur Hausen the Deutsche Krebshilfe has found a researcher personality who, with his life’s work in science, also represents the motto of the Deutsche Krebshilfe: *Helping. Performing Research. Educating.*” comments Professor Otmar D. Wiestler, Scientific Director of the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) and board member of the German Cancer Aid.

“Optimum treatment of all cancer patients throughout Germany is a special concern of mine,” emphasizes Harald zur Hausen. “This, of course, can only be ensured if we have highly qualified doctors and healthcare professionals nationwide. As president of the Deutsche Krebshilfe I will also support regular assessment of the quality of care.”

Harald zur Hausen’s discovery that cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus infections has made it possible to develop a vaccine against one of the most common cancers in women. Vaccination can help many women to prevent the development of cancer precursors or even cervical cancer. For his research, Harald zur Hausen was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2008.

Zur Hausen is convinced that in the area of prevention in general, there is an enormous potential for the battle against cancer: “Particularly when it comes to tobacco and alcohol consumption or exposure to UV radiation, we can still achieve a lot in the prevention of cancer.”

Decades ago, zur Hausen already realized the urgent need of cancer patients for independent medical information relating to the complex topic of cancer. During his time as Scientific Director of DKFZ, in 1986 he established the Cancer Information Service (Krebsinformationsdienst, KID) at the German Cancer Research Center based on the model of the U.S. National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service. KID is a telephone service offering neutral, scientifically profound and easily understandable information about cancer. It contributes to the rapid dissemination of results of translational cancer research which are relevant for practical application. Since April 2009, the Cancer Information Service has taken on the function of a national reference center for cancer information and also collaborates with the German Cancer Aid’s information and counseling service. “In the future, I will further expand these offerings, because I know how important this information is for patients and their families,” said the newly elected president.

Despite the multitude of his obligations, which now include the tasks of president of the German Cancer Aid, Harald zur Hausen firmly intends to continue conducting his own research in the future. “We continue searching for the connection between infections and cancer, particularly in leukemias, bowel cancer and breast cancer. It is only if we learn to understand more about cancer that are we able to effectively fight and prevent this disease.”

Founded in September 1974, the German Cancer Aid (Deutsche Krebshilfe) aims to fight cancer in all its manifestations. The non-profit organization supports projects aimed at improving prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, medical follow-up care and psychosocial care including cancer self help.

A picture for this press release is available at:

<http://www.dkfz.de/de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2009>

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany and is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers. More than 2,000 staff members, including 850 scientists, are investigating the mechanisms of cancer and are working to identify cancer risk factors. They provide the foundations for developing novel approaches in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer. In addition, the staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) offers information about the widespread disease of cancer for patients, their families, and the general public. The Center is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (90%) and the State of Baden-Württemberg (10%).

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