

**Award-Winning Research on the Basic Mechanisms of Cancer:
Karl Freudenberg Award goes to Sven Diederichs, head of the Helmholtz University
Group “Molecular RNA Biology and Cancer”**

Dr. Sven Diederichs is the winner of this year’s Karl Freudenberg Award of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences. Diederichs, a researcher at the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) and the Institute of Pathology of Heidelberg University, will be honored with the €6,000 award on June 5, 2010 for his interdisciplinary research on ribonucleic acids.

Diederichs already concerned himself with cancer in his doctoral thesis and obtained important findings about the mechanisms involved in blood cancer and lung cancer. As a postdoctoral fellow, he has concentrated on the study of microRNAs (miRNAs) – tiny copies of the genetic material, DNA, which the cell does not translate into proteins. They can regulate the activity of genes. Diederichs investigates how microRNAs originate, how they are regulated within cellular processes and how they are changed in tumor cells. It is known today that cancer cells contain less microRNAs than normal cells. Diederichs is now studying the underlying mechanisms. He receives the Freudenberg Award for linking basic research with clinical problems.

Sven Diederichs was born in 1976 in Remscheid, Germany, and studied biochemistry at the Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen and the University of Witten/Herdecke. He did his doctoral thesis at the University of Münster in collaboration with the University of Witten/Herdecke and was awarded the highest grade, “Summa cum laude”. Before joining DKFZ in 2008, he was a researcher at Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center in Boston. Since 2009 he has been head of the Helmholtz University Young Investigators Group on “Molecular RNA Biology and Cancer” at DKFZ and the Institute of Pathology of Heidelberg University. The thirty-three-year-old scientist has already published articles in high-ranking specialist journals such as *Cell* and *PNAS* and has been honored with numerous awards.

The Karl Freudenberg Award comprises an award sum of € 6,000 and was donated in 1986 by Weinheim-based Freudenberg Company with the aim of supporting young scientists in the state of Baden-Württemberg. It is awarded by the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences. The award ceremony will take place on June 5, 2010 on the occasion of the Academy’s annual celebration. Diederichs and other award winners of the Academy will also present their work to interested members of the public on June 4 at 3:30 p.m. in the Academy building.

A picture of the award winner is available on the Internet at:

http://www.dkfz.de/de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2010/images/Diederichs_Sven.jpg

Picture source: Brigitte Engelhardt, German Cancer Research Center

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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