

German Cancer Aid Award for Peter Krammer

Professor Dr. Peter Krammer of the German Cancer Research (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) is awarded the 2011 German Cancer Aid Award (Deutscher Krebshilfe-Preis 2011) jointly with Professor Dr. Klaus Michael Debatin of Ulm University Hospitals. The award is given to the two scientists in recognition of their pioneering research into signaling pathways which lead to cell death and can slow down cancer growth.

Peter Krammer's research, which was often in collaboration with his long-time co-worker, Klaus Michael Debatin, has provided the key to understanding a signaling pathway that triggers the death program, apoptosis, in many cells. The molecular message received by cells from their cell surface receptor CD95 regulates a multitude of important life processes. Apoptosis eliminates cells that have fulfilled their tasks, have become dispensable in the course of embryonic development, or have defects in their genetic material.

However, many diseases are a result of dysregulated CD95 signals causing "too much" or "too little" of programmed cell death. Thus, too much apoptosis is responsible for the self-destruction of tissues in autoimmune diseases and destroys brain cells after a stroke. In cancer, by contrast, programmed cell death fails or does not function sufficiently. On the contrary: in many tumors, growth is even promoted by CD95 signals.

Peter Krammer was able to develop a substance that interferes with CD95 signaling. It is being tested for treating conditions whose symptoms are caused by too much cell death. Its use against malignant brain tumors to slow down cell division and invasive tumor growth is already in the clinical trial stage. "My motivation in my work has always been to achieve more than scientific success by making a contribution to the fight against cancer," says Peter Krammer.

Medical researcher Peter Krammer joined DKFZ in 1976. Since 1989, he has been head of the Immunogenetics Division. For his outstanding research he has been honored with many distinctions in Germany and in other countries.

His publications are among the most frequently cited in the life sciences area.

Deutsche Krebshilfe (German Cancer Aid) has awarded its €10,000 prize annually since 1996. Award winners of recent years have included lymphoma expert Volker Diehl, genome researcher Peter Lichter of DKFZ, and Harald zur Hausen, who later received the Nobel Prize.

A picture of Peter Krammer for this press release is available at:
www.dkfz.de/de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2012/images/krammer-krebshilfepreis.jpg

Picture source: Tobias Schwerdt, DKFZ

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) with its more than 2,500 employees is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany. At DKFZ, more than 1,000 scientists investigate how cancer develops, identify cancer risk factors and endeavor to find new strategies to prevent people from getting cancer. They develop novel approaches to make tumor diagnosis more precise and treatment of cancer patients more successful. Jointly with Heidelberg University Hospital, DKFZ has established the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg where promising approaches from cancer research are

translated into the clinic. 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 a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers. Ninety percent of its funding comes from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the remaining ten percent from the State of Baden-Württemberg.

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