

Helmholtz International Fellow Award for John Mendelsohn

Following a nomination by the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres has distinguished U.S. cancer researcher Prof. Dr. John Mendelsohn with the Helmholtz International Fellow Award. The award gives Dr. Mendelsohn the opportunity to pursue a research visit at DKFZ and other Helmholtz research centers to intensify relations.

In the course of his career, John Mendelsohn has led three major cancer centers. Most recently, from 1996 to 2011, he headed the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. During his tenure as president, he brought the institute to a newer level of international excellence both in research and patient care and doubled its activities and capacity.

Alongside his achievements as a science manager, Mendelsohn accomplished breakthroughs as a cancer researcher and is a pioneer of targeted anticancer drugs. In the 1980s, he developed an antibody against the receptor for epithelial growth factor (EGF receptor), a cell surface molecule that promotes growth in many cancer cells by transmitting signals telling them to divide. The antibody prevents the transmission of these signals into the cell's interior, slowing down uncontrolled cell growth. The antibody has been approved as a drug since 2004, initially in the treatment of colon cancer, and more recently for the treatment of cancers of the head and neck.

John Mendelsohn is a pioneer in the field of personalized cancer therapy. He unites experience in clinical and laboratory research with that of a leader of a large research institution. Thanks to an initiative by Prof. Otmar Wiestler, DKFZ has been a "sister institution" of the MD Anderson Cancer Center since 2008. As an advisor for the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg, Mendelsohn's service has been of great value to both the DKFZ and the Helmholtz Association.

As part of the award, Mendelsohn has made research visits to the DKFZ and two other sites of the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research: the Charité Comprehensive Cancer Center in Berlin and OncoRay, DKFZ's partner at the National Center for Radiation Research in Oncology in Dresden. The award includes a budget of €20,000.

Having concluded his successful presidency at the MD Anderson Cancer Center, Mendelsohn returned to research. In 2011, he became vice director of the newly founded Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy in Houston.

Cooperation with the best researchers around the world is a key objective of the international activities of DKFZ and the Helmholtz Association. The Helmholtz International Fellow Award was established to this end; it targets outstanding senior scientists and research managers who are based outside Germany and have excelled in fields relevant to the Helmholtz Association.

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. The staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) offers information about the widespread disease of cancer for patients, their families, and the general public. 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. In the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research (DKTK), one of six German Centers for Health Research, DKFZ maintains translational centers at seven university partnering sites. Combining excellent university hospitals with high-profile research at a Helmholtz Center is an important contribution to improving the chances of cancer patients. DKFZ is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers, with ninety percent of its funding coming from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the remaining ten percent from the State of Baden-Württemberg.

Dr. Stefanie Seltmann
Leiterin Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit
Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum
Im Neuenheimer Feld 280
D-69120 Heidelberg
T: +49 6221 42 2854
F: +49 6221 42 2968
presse@dkfz.de

Dr. Sibylle Kohlstädt
Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit
Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum
Im Neuenheimer Feld 280
D-69120 Heidelberg
T: +49 6221 42 2843
F: +49 6221 42 2968
presse@dkfz.de