

October 20, 2014 (Sel)

DKFZ Chairman and Director Otmar D. Wiestler has been elected Helmholtz President

The Senate of the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centers has unanimously elected Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Otmar D. Wiestler, Chairman of the Management Board and Scientific Director of the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ), to become the next President of the Helmholtz Association. The Senate followed a unanimous proposal submitted by the Assembly of Members on September 17, 2014. The new President's term of office will start on September 1, 2015. The current Helmholtz President, Prof. Dr. Jürgen Mlynek, came into office in 2005 and will resign after two terms of office, in accordance with the Statutes.

Wiestler's initial reaction was to state: "I am grateful for this evidence of trust placed in me by the Helmholtz Senate and I am looking forward to the exciting task that lies ahead of me." Professor Josef Puchta, a colleague in the DKFZ Management Board, commented on the election: "I have had a pleasant and successful collaboration with Otmar Wiestler over the past 10 years. I am personally pleased for Otmar Wiestler that the Helmholtz Centers and the Helmholtz Senate have entrusted him with this great responsibility. I am convinced that he will invest the same energy into his work for the Helmholtz Association as he has done for the DKFZ."

Wiestler, who has headed the DKFZ since 2004, emphasized that for the remaining eleven months he would devote all his energy to his work for the DKFZ and would vigorously advance all the projects that have been launched under his leadership. These include particularly the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research (DKTK). In this project, launched in 2012, the DKFZ joined seven university hospitals across Germany with the aim of accelerating the translation of research results from bench to bedside, and the expansion of the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg into a center of excellence for individualized cancer medicine.

The Board of Trustees of the DKFZ, headed by Bärbel Brumme-Bothe, Department Head in the Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), will immediately appoint a search committee to search for a suitable successor for Prof. Wiestler.

"I am very pleased that in Professor Wiestler we have found an excellent scientist and research manager for the office of Helmholtz President," said the BMBF State Secretary Cornelia Quennet-Thielen, who headed the joint search committee of the Helmholtz Assembly of Members and the Senate. "I am sure that Professor Wiestler will advance the excellent development of the Helmholtz Association as an outstanding national and international science organization, with both skill and dedication."

Current Helmholtz President Jürgen Mlynek, who in this function also chairs the Senate, said, "I am glad that we have prepared my succession early on and with such a convincing result. I wish Otmar Wiestler all the best in this wonderful office."

Wiestler has been Chairman of the Management Board and Scientific Director of the DKFZ in Heidelberg since 2004. From 2007 to 2012, he was Vice-President for Health of the Helmholtz Association. Wiestler studied medicine at the University of Freiburg. From 1984 to 1987, he worked as a researcher at the University of California in San Diego, and then went on to join the Department of Pathology at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. From 1992 to 2003, he

headed the Department of Neuropathology at the University of Bonn, where he also served as head of the German Brain Tumor Reference Center and as Medical Director of Life & Brain GmbH.

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) with its more than 3,000 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.

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