

2007 ASMR Medallist
Professor Axel Ullrich, PhD



Professor Ullrich is an internationally renowned molecular geneticist and director of the Department of Molecular Biology at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry. For over 25 years Professor Ullrich has been a leader in gene-technology, translating basic science discoveries into medical applications that has, and will continue to change peoples' lives.

Professor Ullrich's pioneering work has seen the development of:

- Hamelin™ (human insulin for the treatment of diabetes; Genentech/Lilly). This was the first gene based biotechnology product introduced into the clinic for the treatment of diabetes
- Herceptin™ (Genentech/Roche), the world's first target-directed, gene discovery-based therapy for the management of metastatic breast cancer and released onto the PBS in Australia in 2006
- SUTENT/Sunitinib, a "multi-targeted" cancer drug that has recently been approved by the FDA (1/2006) and the EMEA (7/2006) for the treatment of Gastro Intestinal Stromal Tumors and Renal Cell carcinoma (Pfizer).

Professor Ullrich has been described as one of the pioneers of the biopharmaceutical industry and one of the most successful and prolific drug discoverers. In 2001 Time Magazine Europe named Professor Ullrich as one of 25 European "tech leaders who are changing how we work, live and play".

Professor Ullrich will be speaking at ASMR Medical Research Week® dinners in Hobart, Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. He will deliver an Address to the NPC in Canberra on Wednesday June 6



Questions and Answers:

Q. There are obvious benefits of targeted treatment over current therapeutic strategies such as radiation therapy and chemotherapy. Do you believe that targeted cancer treatment will render these therapies as obsolete?

A. No – the new drugs add significant new weapons to the doctor's armamentarium against cancer but many of the currently used treatments will remain in use as part of combination therapies.

Q. Given that the drugs Sutent® and Herceptin® are quite different in their action mechanism, multi-targeted vs gene specific, do you think that future treatments will be one particular regimen or a combination?

A. Again – cancer is extremely diverse in its genetic causes – which means that the future will be: designed combination treatment based on very individual diagnostic data.

Q. In the future, will you be able to walk into your doctor and be tested for tumor type and have a specific drug?

A. In essence – yes – the diagnosis will also include the patient's genetic markers and the treatment will include a multi-targeted drug + an Antibody + a stimulator of the immune system as well as radiation or low level chemotherapy.

Q. What do you think the future holds for cancer treatment-will cancer really be a chronic disease rather than a life-threatening disease? Will we realise this in our children's, grandchildren's or great grandchildren's lifetime?

A. Yes I'm convinced of that – for some cancers we have reached that stage already

Q. What do you think the next milestones are?

A. The next important milestone will be to find ways/drugs that will "assist" the smart drugs like SUTENT, by stimulating in a very tumor-specific way the immune system of the individual.

For interviews with Professor Ullrich contact:

Dr Emma Parkinson-Lawrence 0400 635 822
or Catherine West on 0415 928 211

Media materials available from www.asmr.org.au/media/