

WILL THERE BE A MAGIC BULLET FOR CANCER?

Professor Axel Ullrich ... Championing Translational Research

“Targeted therapies are the new soldiers in the fight against cancer and hold promise for the future.”

Eminent German Scientist, Professor Axel Ullrich from the Max Planck Institute is a champion for translational research and a pioneer in cancer research and treatment.

He has demonstrated the ability to flourish in both academia and industry, taking his basic discoveries through to patient therapies. As a scientist, Professor Ullrich said "It is important to me that I develop the idea into an application. I'm not an entrepreneur and I know I need reliable business partners who understand my work".

As co-founder of four biotech companies, Professor Ullrich has brought a new generation of anti cancer drugs from bench to bedside. His work covers an array of topics including growth factors, signal transduction and oncogenes. He believes there is a strong connection between these apparently diverse subjects.

- **Humulin** (human Insulin for the treatment of diabetes), the first therapeutic agent to be developed through gene-based technology and the first biotechnology product ever.
- **SUTENT/Sunitinib**, for the treatment of Gastro Intestinal Stromal Tumors and Renal Cell Carcinoma
- **Herceptin**, the first gene-targeted treatment aimed at the cells causing breast cancer.

Professor Ullrich said, "Of course, the translation of basic science into new treatments takes time and money. Only through the sustained provision of financial support from government, biopharma companies and philanthropic societies will these scientific goals be achieved.

In Germany alone, 390,000 people each year are diagnosed with malignant cancer and several million more around the world. In fact, every fourth death world wide is associated with a tumour. Now and in the future the length and quality of peoples' lives will be improved by cancer treatment with very specific drugs".

Professor Ullrich believes the creation of a gene database in the Singapore Onco Genome laboratory will provide a comprehensive picture of the genetics of cancer cell lines and tissues, enabling us to exploit this knowledge of basic science and develop it into new cancer treatments. He said, "With gene chips and bioinformatics, it will be possible over the next five to 10 years for pathologists to analyze a malignant tumor and identify the exact cocktail of drugs needed to control its spread".

Professor Ullrich said, "If we can use target identification technology to fight tumours effectively, cancer will become a chronic disease essentially like diabetes, allowing patients to live a normal life-span"

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