

Media Release – June 4, 2009

ASMR Medalist, PROFESSOR JOSEF PENNINGER

Speaking at the ASMR MRW® Gala Dinner in Melbourne(Convention Centre)

Tuesday June 4, 2009

"Genetic research and biotechnology have entirely revolutionised our world and will be the key driving force of wealth and industries in the coming centuries"

Professor Josef Penninger is the Scientific Director of the Institute for Molecular Biotechnology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria and the ASMR Medalist 2009.

The main focus of his work is on heart/lung, autoimmune, cancers and bone diseases, **producing a steady stream of groundbreaking** studies across the breadth of immunology

Branded a chronic underachiever by his teachers as a youngster, **Josef Penninger made the list of the 10 most cited scientists in the world two years in a row**, was named as one of the 10 most promising scientists in all fields of science, and recently the Austrian Scientist of the Year

Born in Austria in 1964, he studied medicine, immunology and the history of arts in Innsbruck. Professor Penninger believes the keys to his success are passion, intellectual curiosity and determination. *An enthusiastic believer in innovation, he attributes equal importance to an interdisciplinary approach to science.* Professor Penninger has strong views on how scientists should be educated, funded and encouraged to retain the awe, amazement and fun of discovery! He believes the European Research Council's Framework 7 Program is the best thing to ever happen to European research. He said, *"It is a commitment to research which brings prestige for people and governments and, adds to the scientific output for the benefit of all. It is a template for funding which fosters collaborations and is extremely powerful."*

**Just one of Penninger's research highlights relates to the "Dream Gene"**, his team isolated the "DREAM" gene as the master gene controlling the perception of pain (Cheng et al., *Cell*, 2002). Mice that lack the DREAM gene show greatly reduced sensitivity to all kinds of pain, and interestingly can learn faster and remember things better. Prof Penninger's research is following up the DREAM gene, hoping to find information that could assist sufferers of chronic pain, and also those that have deficits of memory (eg Alzheimer's disease). His group is currently constructing the first ever systemic map of pain perception.

WINNER OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE  
IN HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH TO BE ANNOUNCED AT THE DINNER

### Interview opportunities!

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