The 2013 Georges Mathé Prize awards innovative research into brain tumors

The Prize, supporting translational research of excellence, was established in memory of the pioneer of cancer research in France, Georges Mathé, deceased in 2010. The 2013 Prize was presented on 30 September during the 17th European Cancer Congress (which incorporated the 38th ESMO), Amsterdam, to Dr. Davis Torrejón, a young Peruvian physician carrying out cancer research at the prestigious Vall d’Hebron University Hospital in Barcelona. The Fellowship, amounting to 35,000 Euros, will support his research into cancer stem cell behavior in glioma.

The Georges Mathé Prize, conferred in partnership with the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO), this year recognizes the talent of young Peruvian physician, Dr. Davis Torrejón Castro, who is currently undertaking his residency at the Vall d’Hebron University Hospital in Barcelona. The 2013 Prize will support his research on the role of the Notch signaling pathway in glioma stem cells (GSCs).

Created in 2011 by the Institut du Cancer et d’Immunogénétique (ICIG), the Georges Mathé Prize promotes therapeutic advances and translational research in medical oncology and immunotherapy, honoring the early bench-bedside-bench studies pioneered by Professor Georges Mathé. Bestowed by a jury composed of internationally acclaimed scientists, this prize is awarded to an outstanding young physician/scientist to enable him/her to pursue a career in translational cancer research.

This year’s prize will support a research project on the biology of cancer stem cells in brain cancer (glioma), in particular the role of the Notch signaling pathway. Glioma is a rare cancer but from which remission is exceptional. A better understanding of the biology of cancer stem cells, which play a key role in the development, evolution and cancer resistance to treatment, could lead to new, more effective therapeutic options for the patients. The Notch signaling pathway, which drives cellular proliferation during neurogenesis, is particularly important in this regard.

According to Prof. Josep Tabernero, Head of the Medical Oncology Department at Vall d’Hebron University Hospital and Director of the Vall d’Hebron Institute of Oncology (VHIO), “Dr. Torrejón Castro is undoubtedly one of our upcoming physician-scientists with a shared Vall d’Hebron dedication to carrying out purely multidisciplinary, translational science in seamless connection with the clinical setting. Faithful to the legacy of visionary Georges Mathé, the indisputable godfather of early stem cell research in the fight against cancer, the 2013 George Mathé Translational Research Fellowship will fuel critical research into brain cancer stem cells (bCSCs) – cancer initiating cells in the malignancy of gliomas, and the Notch signaling pathway and its role in a plethora of cell fate decisions and cellular processes implicated in gliomagenesis. Thoroughly deserving of this award, his promising talent as a young medical oncologist and clinical-translational scientist will ultimately help render a more precise form of cancer medicine and expand more effective menu of targeted treatments for the benefit of our glioma patients today, the future of those tomorrow.”
The Georges Mathé Prize: at the heart of ESMO

Georges Mathé, the French pioneer in cancerology and first to successfully achieve a bone marrow transplant to treat leukemia, played a key role in the creation of ESMO, serving as the very first President of the Society. ESMO pays him tribute by incorporating the Georges Mathé Prize, which is now awarded as part of its annual congresses, which serves as yet further testament as to prestige of this Honor. Previous awardees of the Fellowship are Prof. Fabrice André, world-renowned specialist in breast cancer (2011), and Dr. Jean-Sébastian Fresnel (2012).

The sponsors of the Prize are the Institut du Cancer et d'Immunogénétique (ICIG) as well as the pharmaceutical companies Ipsen and the Debiopharm Group:

The Institut du Cancer et d'Immunogénétique (ICIG), Villejuif, was founded in 1961 at the Hospital Paul Brousse by Prof. Georges Mathé, who directed and developed it until 1990. It incorporates INSERM research laboratories and a clinical service of cancerology. Professor Mathé served as the Institute’s Honorary President from 2003-2010.

Current President, Prof. David Marchover, disciple of Georges Mathé and practicing at the Blood and Tumoral Disease Service of the Hospital Paul Brousse that he had created, is honored to support the prize as a tribute to his former mentor and friend.

Ipsen is an innovation-driven international specialty pharmaceutical group with the objective of becoming a leader in specialty healthcare solutions for targeted debilitating diseases. Its development strategy is supported by 3 franchises: neurology, endocrinology and uro-oncology. Moreover, the Group has an active policy of partnerships with international centers of excellence in science or foreground pharmaceutical societies. Ipsen’s R&D surrounds its innovative and differentiated technological platforms, peptides and toxins. The Group has close to 4,900 employees worldwide, of which 900 dedicated to R&D.

The contribution of Ipsen to the Georges Mathé prize demonstrates Ipsen’s support of therapeutic innovation, and translates in its profound admiration for the late Prof. Georges Mathé, his dedication to the patient cause and his pioneer work in oncology. Ipsen also acknowledges Prof. Mathé’s major contribution to the clinical evaluation of triptorelin (Décapeptyl®), a lead molecule in Ipsen’s portfolio, with the first publication of the phase II results in 1986 along with Prof. A. Schally (Nobel laureate) and Dr. Mauvernay, founder of the Debiopharm Group™.


Debiopharm Group™ (Debiopharm) is a pharmaceutical research group founded by Dr. Rolland-Yves Mauveray in 1979 and based in Switzerland. The group uses its scientific and clinical expertise to answer unmet medical needs. Debiopharm in-licences promising molecule drug
candidates. Debiopharm develops its products for global registration and maximum commercial potential for out-licensing to pharmaceutical partners for sales and marketing.

The history of Debiopharm and Dr. Mauveray is intimately linked to that of Prof. Georges Mathé. Their long friendship, lively intuition, scientific and intellectual rigor indeed led to the development of oxaloplatine. Discovered in Japan, this molecule has become, owing to the work of Prof Mathé and to the tenacity of Dr. Mauvernay and their teams, a new international standard in the treatment of colon cancer and a lead product of Debiopharm and its licensees.

Dr. Mauvernay and his group are proud to honor the memory of Georges Mathé, one of the most important researchers of French medicine, with the recent award of this prize at the ESMO Congress.