

Tasuku Honjo wins Nobel in medicine

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Japanese scientist Tasuku Honjo has been awarded this year's Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine, for his discovery of a protein that contributed to the development of an immunotherapeutic drug against cancer.

Honjo, a 76-year-old professor at Kyoto University, won the prize with U.S. national James Allison. Honjo opened a pathway for a new cancer treatment by discovering the PD-1 protein, which is responsible for suppressing immune response.

Following the discovery of the protein in 1992, Honjo presented his research in 2002 showing that a drug that prevents the unification of cancer cells and that the PD-1 protein is effective against cancer in animals.

In 2006, his research was tested in a clinical trial before Opdivo was finally approved in Japan, in July 2014, and subsequently in the United States and Europe. Their work led to a fourth class of treatment alongside surgery, chemotherapy and radiation that harnesses the immune system.

The pair will receive their Nobel from King Carl XVI Gustaf at a formal ceremony in Stockholm on Dec. 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of Alfred Nobel who created the prizes in his last will and testament.