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Glivec inventor wins Szent-GyÃ?Æ?Ã?Â¶rgyi Prize

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Singapore: Professor Alex Matter, CEO, Experimental Therapeutics Centre (ETC), A*STAR, Singapore, has been awarded the 8th Annual Szent-GyÃ?Æ?Ã?Â¶rgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research by the National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) for his contributions to the development of the first drug specifically targeting a molecular lesion in cancer.

Professor Matter is a pioneer of the world's first tyrosine kinase inhibitor drugs, imatinib mesylate, sold under the brand name of Glivec or Gleevec. His discovery turned chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML) from a deadly disease into one that can be treated with an oral pill with nearly 90 percent long-term survival rate, with little or no side-effects. Following Glivec's success in CML, it has been successfully applied to other malignant cancers. Professor Matter's groundbreaking research demonstrated that by specifically inhibiting the activity of key oncogenic cells, it is possible to counteract cancer at the molecular biology level.

Chairman of A*STAR's Biomedical Research Council (BMRC) and winner of 2013 BSA lifetime achievement award Professor Sir George Radda said, "This award gives due recognition to Alex's significant work which revolutionized anti-cancer drug development and gave a boost to the fight against cancer globally. We are proud to have this luminary working hand-in-hand with us in A*STAR."

Professor Matter joined ETC in April 2009, bringing with him his expertise and experience in building bridges between academic research and clinical analysis. ETC now boasts a staff strength of around 80, many of whom are senior group leaders with industrial experience who are able to train young scientists in the rigour of drug discovery and development.

Committed to nurturing the young scientists in this highly competitive field, Professor Matter said, "Young people need to be trained for successful and competitive drug discovery. We are training this young generation in drug discovery the way an industrial outfit works."

Chairman of A*STAR, Mr Lim Chuan Poh, said that, "The phenomenal success of Glivec is a testament to the profound impact that Alex's work has on the approach of cancer drug development. He truly deserves this honour and I extend my heartiest congratulations to him. With his deep expertise in drug discovery, Alex's first-hand experience and in-depth knowledge will guide and mentor Singapore's next generation of scientists in the process of drug discovery and development to meet increasingly difficult healthcare challenges."