

PRESS RELEASE

5 May 2009

A*STAR immunology chair honoured by French Republic

1. Professor Philippe Kourilsky, Chairman of A*STAR's Singapore Immunology Network (SIgN), has received the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honour for his work in Science at both national and international levels. The Legion of Honour is the premier award given by the French Republic for outstanding service to France. The rank of "Commander" is a high rank held by only 3000 persons in France.

2. An expert in molecular biology, Prof Kourilsky spent most of his career as a member of CNRS (Central National de la Recherche Scientifique)¹ before being elected in 1998 to the Collège de France² where he currently holds the Chair in Molecular Immunology. He has been an advisor for biotechnologies in the French Ministry of Research and has participated in the administration of various French research institutions and biotech companies. From 2000 to 2005, he served as Director-General of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, and chaired the international network of Pasteur Institutes³. Prof Kourilsky is also a member of the Academy of Sciences⁴ and the European Molecular

¹ CNRS is the largest governmental research organisation in France and the largest fundamental science agency in Europe. It involves 26,000 permanent employees (researchers, engineers, and administrative staff) and 4,000 temporary workers.

² The Collège de France is a higher education and research establishment in Paris that mainly supports research. Its elite faculty (currently 52 strong) is self-elected from amongst eminent French scholars in a wide range of subjects.

³ The Pasteur Institute is a French non-profit private foundation dedicated to the study of biology, microorganisms, diseases and vaccines. Since its founding in 1887, its researchers (8 of them winners of the Nobel Prize in Physiology and or Medicine) have made breakthrough discoveries enabling the control of virulent diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, tuberculosis, poliomyelitis and plague.

⁴ The Academy of Science (previously known as the Royal Academy of Sciences) is a prestigious institution that brings together prominent French and international scholars to discuss ways of encouraging the spirit of research, and of contributing to the progress science and its applications.

Biology Organisation (EMBO)⁵. He took on the position as Chairman of SIgN in January 2006.

3. Said Chairman of A*STAR, Mr Lim Chuan Poh, “I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Philippe. The rank of Commander of the Legion of Honour befits Philippe as a scientist who is passionate and persevering in his research focused on enhancing human healthcare. His outstanding body of work and his extraordinary ability to build and enhance international scientific networks have indeed contributed enormously to the advancement of scientific research worldwide.”

4. Said Prof Kourilsky, “I am extremely honoured and delighted to receive this award from the French government. Looking forward, I hope to leverage on SIgN’s rapid and significant progress so far, and further develop immunology research in Singapore to ensure its translation towards the clinic and towards solving major health problems of the 21st century.”

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About the Singapore Immunology Network (SIgN)

SIgN, officially inaugurated on 15 January 2008, is a research consortium under A*STAR's Biomedical Research Council. It is aimed at building on the strengths of the existing immunology research groups at A*STAR, as well as expanding and strengthening the

⁵ EMBO promotes excellence in molecular life sciences in Europe by recognising and fostering talented scientists. Since 1964, leading scientists are elected annually to EMBO based on proven excellence in research. Today, EMBO membership numbers over 1300, of which 48 have received the Nobel Prize, and more than half are involved in the execution of the many EMBO initiatives offered to life scientists (e.g., leading peer-reviewed journals, training and networking activities, awards) and have a significant impact on the direction of European life sciences.

immunology research expertise in Singapore. SIgN's objectives include coordinating basic, translational and clinical research needed to establish immunology as a core capability in Singapore. The major focus areas of research at SIgN are Infection and Inflammation, in which SIgN researchers investigate immune responses and regulation in disease-specific contexts. Through this, SIgN aims to build up a strong platform in basic human immunology research for better translation of research findings into clinical applications. SIgN also sets out to establish productive links with local initiatives within Biopolis and across Singapore, as well as to obtain international recognition as a leading immunology research hub while establishing relationships with the best institutions in the world.

For more information about SIgN, please visit www.sign.a-star.edu.sg.

About the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR):

A*STAR is Singapore's lead agency for fostering world-class scientific research and talent for a vibrant knowledge-based Singapore. A*STAR actively nurtures public sector research and development in Biomedical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering, with a particular focus on fields essential to Singapore's manufacturing industry and new growth industries. It oversees 22 research institutes, consortia and centres, and supports extramural research with the universities, hospital research centres and other local and international partners. At the heart of this knowledge intensive work is human capital. Top local and international scientific talent drive knowledge creation at A*STAR research institutes. The Agency also sends scholars for undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral training in the best universities, a reflection of the high priority A*STAR places on nurturing the next generation of scientific talent.

For more information about A*STAR, please visit www.a-star.edu.sg.