Distinguished Visitor Programme

Prof Ernest Beutler
Professor and Chairman, Department of Molecular and Experimental Medicine, The Scripps Research Institute

Biography

Ernest Beutler received his M.D. degree from the University of Chicago in 1950. After several years on the faculty of the University of Chicago, he assumed the Chairmanship of the Department of Medicine at The City of Hope National Medical Center in Duarte, CA in 1959, remaining until 1978 when he became Chairman of the Department of Molecular and Experimental Medicine at The Scripps Research Institute. Prof. Beutler has investigated human disease, both in the laboratory and at the bedside, with particular interest in genetic disorders, such as galactosemia, Gaucher disease, Tay-Sachs disease and hemochromatosis. He has played a major role in developing new treatments for leukemia, and developed one of the first most successful marrow transplantation programs.

Prof. Beutler has served as President of the American Society of Hematology and of the Western Association of Physicians. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Association of American Physicians. Among other honors, he has received the Gairdner Foundation Award and an honorary degree from Tel Aviv University. He is author or editor of ten books and more than 800 scientific articles. His work has been continuously supported by N.I.H. grants since 1960. He served as a member of the N.I.H. Hematology Study Section from 1970-1974 and again from 1989-1990. He was a member of the Blood Advisory Committee of The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute from 1977-1982, a member of the Advisory Council of The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute from 1994-1997.

Lecture Abstract

13 November 2003, 6.15 pm, Lecture Theatre 28 (next to carpark 9), National University of Singapore, Faculty of Medicine

"The Treatment of Leukemia: A triumph of modern medical science"

For more than one hundred years after its description in 1845 all forms of leukemia were nearly uniformly fatal. Beginning in the middle of the last century the picture began to change. First, systematic development of chemotherapy in careful clinical trials improved the outlook, particularly for children. Subsequently, the introduction of bone marrow transplantation had a marked impact, first on acute leukemia and then on chronic granulocytic leukemia. Finally, the development of drugs based on our expanding understanding of the biochemistry and molecular biology of leukemia, typified by the development first of 2-chlorodeoxyadenosine (Cladribine) and later of Imatinib Mesylate (Gleevec) has provided prolonged survival and possibly cures in certain forms of leukemia.

Since most adults with leukemia still die of the disease, much remains to be done. However, the fact that many are now cured of a disease that was uniformly fatal represents an outstanding example of the application of modern biology to the conquest of a dreaded disease.