

# The MTZ®-Award ceremony for young scientists and trend-setting research projects

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30.05.2008 - (idw) HepatoSys - Kompetenznetz Systembiologie des Hepatozyten

### Systems Biology - A Guidepost to the Future

During the second Conference on Systems Biology of Mammalian Cells (SBMC), which took place in Dresden, Germany from May 22nd - 24th, 2008, about 350 scientists from all over the world discussed the latest insights in Systems Biology. They illustrated the great importance of this young scientific discipline, particularly for medical research, which was underlined by the first ever formal conferment of the MTZ®-Award for Medical Systems Biology during the conference on May 23rd. Three junior scientists were honoured for their outstanding dissertations in this field of research. Systems Biology applies itself to the study of biological processes on a systems level. For this purpose, it combines quantitative methods from molecular biology with knowledge drawn from mathematics, computer science, and system sciences. "Systems Biology brings order and sense to the flood of data coming from experimental research on molecules and cells with mathematical precision," summarizes Prof. Dr. Siegfried Neumann, Senior Consultant R&D at Merck, Darmstadt, and Vice Chairman of the HepatoSys Steering Committee.

Beyond the mere understanding of principles, the Systems Biology study of mammalian cells offers great opportunities for medicine and health. Simulations of diverse life processes allow for a better understanding of disease mechanisms and for the focussed development of treatment approaches. In developing medication it becomes possible to predict the effectiveness of potential active agents of interest - time and expenses, as well as animal testing, can be reduced to a minimum.

Against this background of the great significance of Systems Biology to medical research, the MTZ®-Award for Medical Systems Biology was conferred for the very first time during the SBMC in Dresden, Germany. With the award, the MTZ® Foundation, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and Project Management Jülich (PTJ) honoured three junior scientists for their dissertations in the field of Systems Biology. Dr. Niels Blüthgen of the Manchester Interdisciplinary Biocenter in Manchester, UK, shares the first prize with Dr. Julio Saez-Rodriguez of the Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA. Blüthgen worked on the systems biology study and modelling of the MAPK-signal path, which is of crucial importance to vital processes such as embryo development, cell differentiation and reproduction, and programmed cell death. Saez-Rodriguez introduced an interesting approach for understanding complex signal networks not in their totality but starting from individual, manageable modules. The third awardee, Dr. Thomas Eißing of the Institute for Systems Theory in Engineering, University of Stuttgart, Germany, spoke about his contribution to the study of programmed cell death, especially with the aid of mathematical modelling and systems analysis methods. "The three award recipients convinced a very critical jury of experts by the quality and originality of their work", says jury member Neumann. "A new generation of internationally recognized, capable research scientists is emerging in Germany."

The great significance of Systems Biology for the advancement of medical research was made very clear throughout the conference - especially so on Saturday morning, which was dedicated to the subject of biomedicine. Prof. Dr. Hans V. Westerhoff, Chairman of the HepatoSys Steering Committee and Professor at the Manchester Center for Integrative Systems Biology as well as at the University of Amsterdam, gave an impressive description of the value of the Systems Biology approach to the study of complex diseases. While some diseases can be ascribed to one single defective gene or to a certain pathogen, the matter is much more complicated both with conditions such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, heart diseases, cancer and arthritis and with complex infectious diseases such as AIDS or malaria. Here, several factors - for example various defective genes, environmental influences or complicated interactions between pathogen and host - contribute to the course of a disease.

A systems biology approach that takes into consideration the totality of all sources of negative influence and their effects on both cell and organism (instead of examining individual genes or molecules) can contribute significantly to the understanding of a disease and to the development of new and more efficient treatment approaches.

More information about SBMC 2008 can be found at [www.sbmc08.de](http://www.sbmc08.de)

About the MTZ® Foundation and the MTZ®-Award for Medical Systems Biology

True to the motto "For a better future..." the MTZ® Foundation, founded by husband and wife Monika and Thomas Zimmermann, supports science and research in the field of human medicine. At centre stage is the still young scientific discipline of Systems Biology. The foundation dares to bridge modern biomedical research and bioethics, aiming to raise the acceptance of cell and gene research in Germany. The MTZ®-Award for Medical Systems Biology which the foundation confers together with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and Project Management Jülich (PTJ), aims to increase the visibility of outstanding junior scientists in this field. The award, worth a total of 5000 Euro, will be awarded every other year during the SBMC.

About the SBMC and HepatoSys\*

The second Conference on Systems Biology of Mammalian Cells (SBMC), which took place May 22 - 24, 2008, in Dresden, Germany was organized by HepatoSys, the German Systems Biology Competence Network for the investigation of liver cells. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) founded HepatoSys in 2004 in co-operation with Project Management Jülich (PTJ). The research groups in this network work on an interdisciplinary consideration of all processes in the liver with special focus on the liver cell (hepatocyte). Scientists coming from completely different fields collaborate closely on computer modelling of the functions of the biological system. The objective is a virtual liver cell which would make it possible to model physiological processes in silico.

\* Word formation consisting of Hepatocyte - Liver Cell - and Systems Biology

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Weitere Informationen: <http://www.sbmc08.de> - Homepage of the Conference on Systems Biology of Mammalian Cells <http://www.hepatosys.de> - Homepage of HepatoSys - Systems Biology of the Liver Cell uniprotokolle > [Nachrichten](#) > The MTZ®-Award ceremony for young scientists and trend-setting research projects

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