

**Paul Martini Symposium 2005 in connection with the German
Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina
"Therapy with monoclonal antibodies – current situation and
outlook"**

The non-profit organisation Paul Martini Foundation (PMS), Berlin, promotes pharmaceutical research as well as research concerning pharmaceutical therapy and intensifies scientific dialogue on questions regarding pharmaceutical research and development between medical scientists at universities, hospitals, the research-based pharmaceutical industry, other research institutions and government agencies. To achieve this objective, the PMS awards a large annual research prize and organizes workshops and symposia.

The scientific symposium held by the PMS in connection with the German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina on November 11/12, 2005, in Berlin was the first in Germany to deal exclusively with the therapeutic application and evolution of monoclonal antibodies. Leading scientists and experts from clinics, research institutions, government agencies and industry joined the approx. 150 participants of the event in a discussion on current and future applications of these diverse biotechnology-based pharmaceuticals. The symposium was scientifically chaired by professors Peter C. Scriba and Stefan Endres, both of Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, and Gunther Hartmann from the University Clinic in Bonn.

Monoclonal antibodies, which were discovered in 1975 by Georges Köhler and César Milstein who ultimately won the Nobel prize for their work, are directed at the body's own molecules such as receptors or modulators as far as their binding specificity is concerned and can be generated in any quantity. Currently, 17 monoclonal antibodies are approved for therapy worldwide, 15 of them in Germany. Cancer and autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis represent the most important therapeutic indications. More than 70 additional monoclonal antibodies are currently in advanced clinical development or awaiting marketing authorization. On a worldwide scale, over 400 clinical studies are currently being conducted, in which these new antibodies and novel molecules derived from the antibodies are tested or the application of existing antibodies is expanded.

Following a comprehensive overview of the breakthroughs in the first 30 years following the discovery of monoclonal antibodies, insight into new production methods and an outlook on future developments in this field, the speakers presented the current situation and prospects for therapy involving monoclonal antibodies for Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, multiple sclerosis, allergic asthma as well as lymphoma and various cancers, especially breast and intestinal cancer.

Overall, the symposium showed the enormous enrichment in therapeutic possibilities that is presented by currently available monoclonal antibodies and the great future opportunities for more effective therapy provided by continued research of the potential of these agents and their derivatives.