

**2008 Paul Martini Symposium in connection with the German
Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina
"Principles and Perspectives in Pharmaceutical Prevention"**

On November 14 and 15, 2008, more than 150 attendees from science, industry and the health care sector used the opportunity to obtain an overview of "Principles and Perspectives in Pharmaceutical Prevention" during the eponymous symposium. As phrased by Professor Peter C. Scriba of Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, the central question was "what non-pharmaceutical prevention can already achieve and what pharmaceuticals can accomplish as well." The symposium was chaired by Professor Scriba together with Professor Friedrich Wilhelm Schwartz of the Hanover Medical School. The symposium was jointly organized by the Berlin-based Paul Martini Foundation and Leopoldina.

Scientists in both academic and industrial research are working intensively to ensure that more and more diseases can be not just healed or alleviated but even prevented. Thanks to this research (as shown by the symposium), adolescent diabetes and prostate cancer may be prevented through pharmaceuticals in just a few years.

Today, medicine has a lot of opportunities to prevent diseases based on medication and an appropriate diet. However, several speakers at the symposium were convinced that these opportunities are simply used insufficiently in many cases. Using only pharmaceuticals that have already been approved for marketing, almost 16% of cancerous conditions occurring on a global scale could be avoided, concluded nobel laureate Professor Dr. Harald zur Hausen. However, medical practice is a far cry from that.

Today, vaccinations can prevent more than 25 diseases. Thanks to increased industrial research, shingles, genital herpes, malaria and meningococcal group B meningitis could possibly also be prevented by 2013. Vaccinations can sometimes have additional advantageous effects: The symposium showed that vaccinations against chickenpox or influenza also reduce the risk of stroke.

It was stressed that, despite their seemingly simple application, the preventative administration of vitamins and nutrients often requires a scientific and practical risk consideration. An appropriate framework in the health care system would also be needed, which is why the long-planned German Preventative Medicine Act is long overdue. However, previous drafts did not contain any provisions for pharmaceutical prevention. Several of the speakers thought that this calls for a shift in thinking.

The non-profit organization Paul Martini Foundation (PMS), Berlin, promotes pharmaceutical research as well as research concerning pharmaceutical therapy and intensifies scientific dialog between medical scientists at universities, hospitals, the research-based pharmaceutical industry, other research institutions, representatives of health policy and government agencies. To achieve the foundation's purpose, the PMS awards a large annual prize and organizes workshops and symposia.