

**The Japanese Cancer Association and Debiopharm Group  
Present the JCA-Mauvernay Award to Dr Ushijima for his oncology research**

**Lausanne, Switzerland, October 5, 2009** - Debiopharm Group (Debiopharm), a Swiss-based global biopharmaceutical group of companies with a focus on the development of prescription drugs that target unmet medical needs, and the Japanese Cancer Association (JCA) presented 'The JCA-Mauvernay Award' to Dr Toshikazu Ushijima from the National Cancer Center Research Institute in Tokyo, for his outstanding and innovative research in basic science in the "epigenetic field for cancerization". The ceremony took place on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, during the General Assembly of the 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the JCA in Japan, where Professor Setsuo Hirohashi, President of the JCA and Dr Rolland-Yves Mauvernay, Founder and President of Debiopharm Group presented him with the Award.

Since 1999, Dr Toshikazu Ushijima has headed the Carcinogenesis Division at the National Cancer Center Research Institute. His basic research focuses on the "*Establishment of a novel concept referred as "epigenetic field for cancerization, its mechanistic clarification, and its potential clinical application"*". He demonstrated that aberrant DNA methylation, the most common molecular lesion of the cancer cell, accumulated in surrounding non-cancerous tissue of cancer patients, and that there is a correlation between this accumulation and the risk of cancer development. He also demonstrated that *Helicobacter pylori* infection, a potent gastric carcinogenic factor, induces aberrant DNA methylation in gastric mucosa. In recent studies, Dr Ushijima showed that the suppression of inflammation with an immunosuppressive drug leads to the suppression of DNA methylation induced by *Helicobacter pylori* infection. He has also initiated a prospective study to use DNA methylation levels in gastric mucosa as a risk marker for metachronous gastric cancers following endoscopic mucosal dissection. The finding in the stomach is likely to be expanded to colorectal, esophageal, liver, breast, and renal cancers, in which the individuals' life style can produce predisposed field for cancers in a normal-appearing tissue.

"We are proud to reward Dr Ushijima for his innovative work and the possibility that one day it may lead to a clinical application," said Rolland-Yves Mauvernay, President and Founder of Debiopharm Group. "Having a marker to detect the development of new primary cancers in patients who have already undergone surgery is crucial."

**About the JCA-Mauvernay Award**

The JCA-Mauvernay Award is organised jointly by the JCA and Debiopharm to honour innovative fundamental and clinical oncology research and to encourage Japanese scientists to make their work available outside Japan. This is the fifth edition of the ceremony.

**About Debiopharm Group**

Debiopharm Group is a Swiss-based global biopharmaceutical group of companies with a focus on the development of prescription drugs that target unmet medical needs. The group in-licenses promising biological and small molecule drug candidates. It develops its products for global

registration and maximum commercial potential. Once registered, the products are out-licensed to pharmaceutical partners for sales and marketing.

Debiopharm independently funds the worldwide development of all of its products while providing expertise in pre-clinical and clinical trials, manufacturing, drug delivery and formulation, and regulatory affairs.

Founded in 1979 and headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, Debiopharm has developed four products with global combined sales of \$2.6 billion in 2008.

For more information on Debiopharm Group, please visit: [www.debiopharm.com](http://www.debiopharm.com)

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