Website address:
https://www.gesundheitsindustrie-bw.de/en/article/press-release/top-german-research-prize-goes-freiburg-cancer-researcher

Top German research prize goes to Freiburg cancer researcher

The Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz-Prize 2025 goes to Prof. Dr Robert Zeiser for his outstanding research in haematology and immunology. Zeiser's research at the University of Freiburg and the Medical Center – University of Freiburg have led, among other things, to new types of cancer therapy that has increased survival rates and the patients' quality of life.

Prof. Dr Robert Zeiser, a member of the Faculy of Medicine at the University of Freiburg and Research group leader at the Medical Center – University of Freiburg, has been awarded the most prestigious research prize in Germany, the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize 2025. The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) announced the award on Wednesday, 11 December 2024. Zeiser is one of ten prizewinners this year. The prize is endowed with 2.5 million euros. For many years, Zeiser has been researching how stem cell transplants in cancer therapy can be made safer and more effective. His research has already led to specific new cancer therapies.

"I am extremely pleased to receive this award. My goal is to make a real difference for cancer patients with my research," says Zeiser. "It is both an incentive and recognition, showing that our research is highly relevant."

Significant improvements in stem cell transplants

Robert Zeiser and his team are shedding light on the complex interactions that occur after stem cell transplantation, which is the last treatment option for various cancers. In the majority of patients, interactions with the donor's immune cells occur, leading to dangerous acute or chronic rejection. Zeiser has deciphered the mechanisms of this graft-versus-host disease, thus enabling new therapeutic approaches. In particular, the development and clinical introduction of Janus kinase inhibitors have opened up new perspectives for patients: Survival rates increased, while the side effects of transplants were noticeably reduced. His patients at the Comprehensive Cancer Center Freiburg (CCCF) at the Medical Center – University of Freiburg are already benefiting from this. Zeiser's team has also shown ways to increase the effectiveness of the use of so-called CAR-T cells against cancer while reducing inflammatory reactions in the brain.

Prof. Dr Kerstin Krieglstein, rector of the University of Freiburg, says: "We are delighted for and with Robert Zeiser that his outstanding academic achievements are being honoured with the 2025 Leibniz Prize. His cutting-edge research is enabling enormous advances in cancer therapies – and exemplifies our claim as the University of Freiburg: that we are developing crucial contributions to overcoming pressing social challenges. My warmest congratulations to Robert Zeiser on receiving the most prestigious German research award!"

„Robert Zeiser's cutting-edge research is enabling enormous advances in cancer therapies – and exemplifies our claim as the University of Freiburg: that we are developing crucial contributions to overcoming pressing social challenges."-Prof. Dr. Kerstin Krieglstein (Rektorin der Universität Freiburg)

Over the past 20 years, Zeiser has contributed to around 300 scientific publications. He is a member of the Cluster of Excellence CIBSS – Centre for Integrative Biological Signalling Studies at the University of Freiburg and, since 2021, spokesperson of the Collaborative Research Centre SFB1479 OncoEscape at the University of Freiburg. Also in 2021, he received the German Cancer Prize from the German Cancer Society. Since 2023, he has been funded by an ERC Advanced Grant.

"I warmly congratulate Robert Zeiser on this award, which confirms the very high quality of his medical research in Freiburg. His continuous excellent research achievements in a wide range of fields are impressive," says Prof. Dr Lutz Hein, Dean of the Medical Faculty at the University of Freiburg.

Prof. Dr Robert Zeiser (48), a native of Freiburg, studied medicine at the University of Freiburg, Tel Aviv University in Israel and the University of South Florida in Tampa, USA. After a research stay at Stanford University, USA, Zeiser habilitated in 2010 and became a senior physician at the Department of Internal Medicine I at the Medical Center – University of Freiburg. In 2013, he received a Heisenberg professorship and has headed the Department of Tumour Immunology since 2019.

"Robert Zeiser is a prime example of university medicine. He bridges the gap between basic research and patient care at the

highest scientific level. With his discoveries, he has significantly expanded the therapeutic options in cancer medicine," emphasises Prof. Dr Frederik Wenz, Senior Medical Director of the Medical Center – University of Freiburg. "This interaction between cutting-edge research and clinical work is an integral part of our Comprehensive Cancer Center Freiburg (CCCF). As a result, our patients always benefit from the latest research findings."

About the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize

The Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize is the most important research funding prize in Germany. It honours outstanding researchers who, at the current stage of their academic career, have already achieved excellent fundamental results in their research areas and are expected to have a lasting impact on the research landscape in Germany. The aim of the Leibniz programme is to improve their working conditions and expand their research opportunities.

Press release

11-Dec-2024
Source: Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

Further information

University and Science Communications
University of Freiburg
Tel.: +49 (0) 761 203 4302
email: kommunikation@zv.uni-freiburg.de

- Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg