Professor Paul Workman – Short Biography

Professor Paul Workman is a leader in the discovery and development of molecularly targeted cancer drugs and is a passionate advocate of personalized cancer therapy. A molecular pharmacologist and chemical biologist, Paul has been responsible for the discovery and development of a large number of new molecularly targeted cancer drugs.

Paul is currently Deputy Chief Executive of The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) and Director of the ICR's Cancer Research UK Cancer Therapeutics Unit in Sutton, UK, which is the largest non-profit cancer drug discovery group worldwide. He is also Head of ICR's Division of Cancer Therapeutics and Harrap Professor of Pharmacology and Therapeutics.

Paul obtained his BSc (Hons) in Biochemistry from Leicester University (1973) and his PhD in Cancer Pharmacology from Leeds University (1977). He then moved to Cambridge to become a postdoctoral fellow and scientific staff member of the MRC Clinical Oncology Unit, MRC Centre, Cambridge University (1976-1990) where he established and led the cancer pharmacology group, making major contributions to drugs targeting tumour hypoxia.

Following a period as UICC Visiting Fellow at Stanford University and SRI International, California (1989), Paul was appointed as Cancer Research Campaign Professor and Director of Laboratory Research in the Department of Medical Oncology, Beatson Laboratories, Glasgow University (1990-1993).

Paul then gained experience in the pharmaceutical industry. From 1993-1997 Paul was Head of the Cancer Research Bioscience Section at AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, Alderley Park, UK where he also initiated and led the strategic alliance with Sugen. From there he moved to take up his current post at ICR.

Honours and awards include: European School of Oncology Award for Excellence in Oncology Research (1985); Cancer Research Campaign/Cancer Research UK Life Fellowship (1991); Fellowship of the Institute of Biology (1997); Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences (2002); Bruce Cain Award of the New Zealand Cancer Society (2003 and 2011); Dutch New Drug Development Office Award for Cancer Drug Development (2006); DSc (Hon) Leicester University (2009); National Cancer Research Institute/British Association for Cancer Research Tom Connors Award Lecture (2009); Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry (2010); Royal Society of Chemistry George and Christine Sosnovsky Award for Cancer Therapy (2010); AACR Team Science Award (2012) and Royal Society of Chemistry World Entrepreneur of the Year Award (2012).

Paul has been a Scientific Founder of two successful biotechnology companies: Chroma Therapeutics and Piramed Pharma, the latter subsequently acquired by Roche. He has also advised a number of other biotech and pharmaceutical companies and non-profit groups. Paul is Deputy Editor of Molecular Cancer Therapeutics, Reviews Editor of Cancer Cell and serves on the editorial boards of many other journals.

Paul has been responsible for many of innovative new cancer drugs entering the clinic, including the EGFR inhibitor gefitinib (Iressa), the HSP90 molecular chaperone inhibitor AUY922 and the PI3 kinase inhibitor GDC-0941. His Cancer Therapeutics Unit has been involved in the discovery over the last five years of sixteen preclinical development candidates with six agents in Phase I clinical trial in the last two years and abiraterone approved by the FDA and EMEA in 2011. Paul's particular research interests are in molecular chaperones and the stress response, oncogenic kinases including PI3 kinase, molecular cancer therapeutics, and 'drugging the cancer genome.' He originated the concept of the Pharmacological Audit Trail, now widely used in biomarker-led early clinical trials. He has published around 470 journal articles, edited several books and journal issues, and lectured widely on cancer drugs.