



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CO-FOUNDER OF INNATE PHARMA WINS THE EUROPEAN YVETTE MAYENT – INSTITUT CURIE PRIZE FOR WORK ON INNATE IMMUNITY**

**Prestigious award for Alessandro Moretta endorses the innovative theory of innate immunity developed by the co-founder of biotechnology company Innate Pharma and colleagues**

**Marseille, June 5th, 2001**

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Alessandro Moretta, co-founder of Innate Pharma, has won the European Yvette Mayent – Institut Curie prize for his research on innate immunity, Innate Pharma announced today. Along with joint-winners, Lorenzo Moretta and Klas Kärre, Alessandro Moretta received his award last month from Roger-Gerard Schwarzenberg, France's Research Minister. The award is presented to one or several researchers from different laboratories, in recognition of a scientific discovery contributing to the advancement of cancer diagnostics, treatment or prevention. The discovery may be in physics, chemistry, biology, epidemiology or a clinical field.

The work of Klas Kärre and the Moretta brothers has greatly increased understanding of the mechanisms employed by the immune system to identify and destroy foreign bodies. Their research is promoting improvements in both cancer immunotherapy and the management of bone marrow transplants in leukaemia treatment.

Klas Kärre began his research with formulation of the "missing self" hypothesis. According to this, there are two prerequisite conditions which together are necessary to trigger the cytotoxic activity of natural killer (NK) lymphocytes against foreign or malignant cells: non-recognition of the molecules of the self expressed on normal cells (MHC – Major Histocompatibility Complex proteins), and recognition of abnormal markers.

This work has been significantly advanced by the Moretta brothers. Alessandro and Lorenzo identified the mechanisms controlling NK cell activity at the molecular level and confirmed Klas Kärre's initial hypothesis. When the conditions necessary for killer cell recognition are not fulfilled, malignant cells can escape the immune system. Therapeutic perspectives are very important in cancer research. Identification of the receptors implicated in this phenomenon may lead to the development of a new generation of immuno-modulating medications which act to prevent immune system avoidance. Anti-rejection treatments for transplants, (particularly of bone marrow), should also benefit from these developments.

Alessandro Moretta is one of the cofounders of French biotechnology company, Innate Pharma, which focuses on the manipulation of non-conventional lymphocytes, including NK cells. The company's technology, endorsed by the Yvette Mayent prize, is directly based on the work of Klas Kärre and the Moretta brothers. Innate Pharma develops novel immuno-modulating drugs and cellular therapy techniques primarily for cancer. The first lead candidates are expected to enter clinical trials in 2002.

*"I am honoured to share the Yvette Mayent prize with Klas Kärre and my brother Lorenzo," said Alessandro Moretta. "This not only represents important recognition of the innate immunity theory in the scientific community, but is also an encouragement to continue our research with the aim of developing a novel approach to anti-cancer immunotherapies in the clinic. This award highlights the progressive nature of Innate Pharma and is an important validation of the company's fundamental beliefs."*