



ORDEN POUR LE MÉRITE  
FÜR WISSENSCHAFTEN UND KÜNSTE

Uğur ŞAHİN

Doctor

Born September 19 1965 in İskenderun (Turkey)

Prof. Ugur Sahin, M.D., is a trained physician and a professor of Translational Oncology and Immunology at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, and the Helmholtz Institute for Translational Oncology (HI-TRON). Working with Prof. Özlem Türeci, M.D. since the late 1990s, Sahin has accomplished a series of fundamental advances in the field of mRNA vaccines. Their work, including the creation of the first approved mRNA drug, has had a transformative impact on medicine.

Sahin and Türeci substantially improved mRNA translation, addressing the long-standing challenge of low mRNA stability and potency. They discovered and leveraged specific uptake mechanisms of mRNA by immune cells to boost vaccine effectiveness, leading to the first human trials of nanoparticulate mRNA vaccines and the development of highly potent vaccines for human use. Their pioneering work on neoantigen mRNA vaccines laid the foundation for individualized cancer vaccines, enabling potential therapies tailored to each patient's distinct cancer mutation profile.

Sahin is co-founder of Ganymed Pharmaceuticals, founded in 2001 and later acquired by Astellas Pharma, which successfully developed the antibody zolbetuximab for cancer therapy; and BioNTech, founded in 2008. Under Sahin's leadership as CEO, BioNTech has achieved remarkable successes, most notably with the development of BNT162b2 (the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine), the first ever approved mRNA product. This vaccine has been distributed worldwide and has been instrumental in combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sahin has mentored more than 50 Ph.D. students during his career and remains committed to training the next generation of scientists. He has also contributed to more than 950 international patents and has received numerous prestigious awards for his work.

Acceptance into the Order 2023



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