Dr. James Allison of MD Anderson Cancer Center Awarded *2014 Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research*

Bethesda, Md. – February 6, 2014 – The National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) announced today that James Allison, Ph.D., Chairman, Department of Immunology at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, has been awarded the 2014 *Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research.* Dr. Allison's pioneering cancer research in the area of immunotherapy led to the successful development of "immune checkpoint therapy," and the first FDA-approved drug for the treatment of metastatic melanoma.

In bestowing the award, NFCR's selection committee recognized Allison's momentous achievement in the fight against cancer and his extraordinary leadership in the modern era of oncology. While mainstream cancer research and treatment focused for decades on radiation therapy and chemotherapy, Dr. Allison's trailblazing work in immunotherapy—working with the body's own immune system to fight off cancer—never ceased.

"Dr. Allison's work has already saved numerous lives and shines a bright light on a future direction of oncology," said Dr. Alex Matter, CEO of Experimental Therapeutics Centre & D3, A*STAR, Singapore, winner of the 2013 *Szent-Györgyi Prize* and Chair of this year's Prize Selection Committee. "He has validated the immunotherapy approach and turned previously widely-held beliefs on their heads with his discoveries. His work is extremely significant and constitutes a turning point in the history of progress in cancer treatments."

Dr. Allison, along with Dr. Jeff Bluestone, was the first to show that a protein receptor on T cells, the enforcers of the immune system, acts as a checkpoint to shut down immune response. Allison developed an antibody that unleashes the immune system to attack cancer by blocking the immune checkpoint molecule CTLA-4 and conducted extensive preclinical work showing that blockade of CTLA-4 could lead to rejection of many types of tumors. This research led to the development of the first drug to significantly extend survival for patients with late-stage melanoma. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the drug, ipilimumab, for treatment of metastatic melanoma in 2011. Ipilimumab is now in clinical trials to treat a variety of other cancers.

"I am honored to receive this distinguished award from the National Foundation for Cancer Research for my work in immunology," said Dr. Allison. "It has been an encouraging journey thus far, and I am humbled to share this prize with the previous winners. The most important reward, however, has been the number of lives being saved using anti-CTLA-4 treatment and the prospect of more to come as checkpoint blockade develops as a major therapeutic approach to cancer."

"Dr. Allison has revolutionized the way science approaches cancer treatments. He is on the front line in the war against cancer and could not be more deserving of this award," said Sujuan Ba, Ph.D., Co-chair of the 2014 *Szent-Györgyi Prize* Selection Committee and Chief Operating Officer of NFCR.

Dr. Allison will be honored at an award ceremony held April 30, 2014 at The National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Media and the public are invited and encouraged to attend.

About the *Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research*

The *Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research* was established by the National Foundation for Cancer Research in honor of its co-founder, Albert Szent-Györgyi, M.D., Ph.D., recipient of the 1937 Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine.

The 2014 *Szent-Györgyi Prize* Selection Committee was chaired by Alex Matter, M.D. and co-chaired by Sujuan Ba, Ph.D. Other selection committee members included leaders in cancer research and drug development from academic institutes and biotech and pharmaceutical industries: Steven D. Averbuch, M.D., Bristol-Myers Squibb Company; Webster K. Cavenee, Ph.D., Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Zhu Chen, M.D., Ph.D., Shanghai Jiao Tong University; Sara Courtneidge, Ph.D., Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute; Carlo M. Croce, M.D., The Ohio State University; Stan Kaye, M.D., Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust; Marsha A. Moses, Ph.D., Boston Children's Hospital; Richard O'Reilly, M.D., Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; Scott D. Patterson, Ph.D., Amgen, Inc.; Peter K. Vogt, Ph.D., The Scripps Research Institute; and General Secretary Yi Michael Wang, M.D., Ph.D., NFCR.

About James Allison, Ph.D.

Dr. James Allison is currently the Chairman of the Immunology Department and executive director of the immunotherapy platform for the Moon Shots Program at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. From 2004 to 2012, he served as Chairman of the Immunology Program and other distinguished positions at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. Prior to 2004, Dr. Allison was faculty at the University of California, Berkley; Stanford University; and the UT MD Anderson Cancer Center. He earned his Ph.D. in biological sciences from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Allison is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute alumnus. He has won numerous honors for biomedical research including the inaugural AACR-CRI Lloyd J. Old Award in Cancer Immunology, The Economist's 2013 Innovations Award for Bioscience, and a 2014 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences. He co-leads a Stand Up to Cancer Dream Team research project in immunotherapy.

About the National Foundation for Cancer Research

The National Foundation for Cancer Research (NFCR) is a leading charity dedicated to funding cancer research and public education relating to cancer prevention, earlier diagnosis, better treatments and, ultimately, cures for cancer. NFCR promotes and facilitates collaboration among scientists to accelerate the pace of discovery from bench to bedside.

Since 1973, NFCR has provided nearly $310 million in direct support of discovery-oriented cancer research focused on understanding how and why cells become cancerous, and on public education relating to cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. NFCR scientists are discovering cancer's molecular mysteries and translating these discoveries into therapies that hold the hope for curing cancer. NFCR is about *Research* for a Cure—cures for *all* types of cancer. For more information, please visit www.NFCR.org.