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HU biochemistry professor to receive major award from American Association for Cancer Research

• By JUDY SIEGEL

A Hebrew University professor is to receive the American Association for Cancer Research's 2013 Award for Outstanding Achievement in Chemistry, the organization announced Sunday. This comes on the heels of two Israeli Nobel Prize winners named members of its new international academy just days earlier.

Prof. Alexander Levitzki, an expert in biological chemistry at Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Alexander Silberman Institute of Life Sciences, will deliver his award lecture in Washington, DC, April 9, on "Eradicating Tumors by Targeting Nonviral Vectors Carrying Poly-IC."

The AACR said that Levitzki was chosen for the honor in recognition

of his contributions to signal transduction therapy and his work on the development of tyrosine kinase inhibitors as effective agents against cancer.

Levitzki's concept of targeted cancer therapy using protein tyrosine kinase inhibitors is extensively used by the international pharmaceutical industry to develop anti-cancer drugs.

His studies formed the basis for the development of drugs like imatinib, crizotinib and lapatinib – used for the treatment of patients with chronic myeloid leukemia, lung cancer and breast cancer, respectively. There are more than 200 such inhibitors at various stages of the US Food and Drug Administration's approval process.

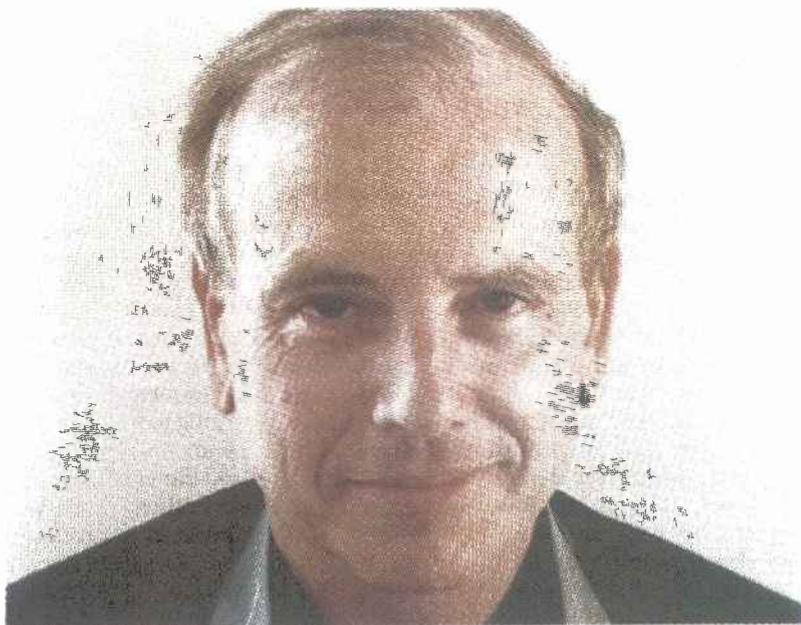
His method of large-scale screen-

ing of synthetic compounds tested against a large spectrum of protein kinases for specificity – followed by systematic testing in cell lines and animal studies – became the standard procedure in most of the laboratories working in that field.

Levitzki has received numerous awards throughout his career, including the Israel Prize in Biochemistry, Israel's Wolf Prize for Medicine, the Hamilton-Fairley Award from the European Society of Medical Oncology, the Rothschild Prize in Biology and two Prostate Cancer Foundation Research Awards. Last year he received the Nauta Award in Pharmacology, which is the highest award from the European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry.

He is a board member of the Israel Cancer Association, was chairman of the division of natural sciences at the Israel Academy of Sciences, an honorary member of the American Society of Biological Chemists and an elected member of the European Molecular Biology Organization.

Just last week, Prof. Avraham Hershko and Prof. Aharon Ciechanover, the two Technion-Israel Institute of Technology researchers who received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2004, were chosen to join the AACR's academy as associates along with other world-class researchers who have made significant advances in the struggle against cancer.



ALEXANDER LEVITZKI
(Courtesy)