Pierre Potier

Outstanding Contribution in the Area of Medicinal Chemistry

There is a century-old rift that has separated the cultures of chemistry and biology. However, as Arthur Kornberg stated, "Life is a chemical process. Much of life can be expressed in chemical languages". Increasingly, chemists are pursuing biological problems, and we can see excellent evidence of this in Professor Potier's distinguished achievements in the area of medicinal chemistry.

Pierre Potier received a degree in pharmacology (Paris, 1957) and a doctorate in physics (Paris, 1960). These two different disciplines have been productively combined in his research career. A representative example of this can be seen in his group's development of the tublin test used in antiplastic medication, which led to discovery of Navelbine, prescribed for the treatment of bronchial and breast cancers. In addition, he invented a process to produce Taxol from yew bark extract, and then went on to find more active derivative, Taxotere. It is remarkable that the two antineoplastic drugs are prescribed today throughout the world.

Thus most of Dr. Potier's work is at the interface between chemistry and biology. Effective partnership between basic research and industry is also successfully illustrated. Now Dr. Potier is the author of over 400 publications, and holds a professorship at several research organizations.

Professor Potier has been awarded many prizes in France and abroad. He was named Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur and Commandeur dans l'Ordre National du Mérite, two of the highest distinctions awarded by the French Government. In 1998, he was awarded the CNRS Gold Medal, given to figures who have made an exceptional contribution to the field of science.

He is member of five foreign academies. In particular, it was my privilege, as the President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Japan, to present him with the certificate of honorary membership during his visit to Japan in 1995.

It has been a great pleasure and honor to have been associated with Professor Potier

from 1981, when we worked together to organize the French—Japanese Medicinal and Fine Chemistry Symposium (FJS), until now, as I share in honoring him on his 70th birthday.

YUICHI KANAOKA
Chairman, Toyama International Institution
President, Toyama University of International Studies