

# THE VILCEK FOUNDATION

For Immediate Release

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## World-Renowned Scientist and Philanthropist Honored with Slovakia's Goodwill Ambassador Award

**New York, NY, March 29, 2010** - NYU Langone Medical Center microbiologist Dr. Jan T. Vilcek was a proud recipient of the inaugural Slovakia Goodwill Ambassador Award, the distinguished award of honor presented to Slovaks who have made significant contributions to society while living abroad. The award was bestowed on March 20, 2010 in a ceremony in Bratislava by the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miroslav Lajcak. Dr. Vilcek is a co-discoverer of Infliximab, a therapeutic drug that revolutionized the treatment of inflammatory disorders such as Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis. He and his wife Marica continue to grant hundreds of thousands of dollars to foreign-born Americans in the arts and sciences through the Vilcek Foundation and the Vilcek Prizes. Headquartered in New York City, the Foundation has just announced the recipients of the 2010 Vilcek Prizes and will present the awards on April 7 to accomplished biomedical scientists and culinary artists.

During the ceremony, Minister Miroslav Lajcak explained that the awards were intended to improve the perception of Slovakia abroad, as well as serve as an expression of appreciation from the Slovak people for the accomplishments of their compatriots abroad. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more than twenty people were nominated from the specialties of science, media, arts, culture and sports. Together with Dr. Vilcek, the Ministry celebrated Dr. Jaroslav Fabian, a physicist working in Germany who has done pioneering research in the field of spintronics; and Mr. Tomas Valasek, a Director at the Centre for European Reform, and a former Policy Director at the Slovak Ministry of Defense.

"We proposed Dr. Vilcek for the Slovakia Goodwill Ambassador Award for two reasons: firstly, for his remarkable body of research, and the contributions he has made to the lives of hundreds of thousands of people he has helped as a result of his work; and secondly, for the order of magnitude of his generosity and creativity, in establishing the Vilcek Foundation to honor fellow immigrants and *their* innovations," said Dr. Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel. Dr. Diamonstein-Spielvogel, an author, television interviewer and producer, preservationist, and civic activist, initiated Dr. Vilcek's nomination along with her husband, Ambassador Carl Spielvogel, former US Ambassador to the Slovak Republic and Chairman/CEO of Carl Spielvogel Enterprises.

Fleeing communist Czechoslovakia, Dr. Vilcek came to the United States with his wife in the 1960s. Arriving in New York with no more than a suitcase and the names of a few professional contacts, he had what he calls "beginner's luck" and joined the faculty of the New York University School of Medicine, while Marica, an art historian, secured a position at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the 1980s, Dr. Vilcek's research at NYU contributed to the development of a novel treatment for autoimmune diseases, now marketed as Remicade by Johnson & Johnson. Dr. Vilcek donated a very significant portion of the royalties from the sales of Remicade to New York University School of Medicine. Estimated to be worth \$105 million, Dr. Vilcek's gift is believed to be the largest ever made by an active faculty member to a medical institution.

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