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A MAJOR NEW AWARDS PROGRAM HONORS CANCER RESEARCHER JOAN MASSAGUÉ AS FOREIGN-BORN INNOVATOR

NEW YORK, NY —The Vilcek Foundation today announced that Joan Massagué, Program Chairman, Cancer Biology and Genetics, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, will receive the inaugural Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Research. This major new prize is designed to honor foreign-born scientists who have made extraordinary contributions to biomedical research in the United States.

The only national award to honor outstanding creative achievement by immigrants to America, The Vilcek Prize is accompanied by a \$50,000 cash award. In conjunction with the prize, the Foundation is launching an annual lecture at New York University School of Medicine. Dr. Massagué, who was born in Barcelona, Spain, will deliver the first Vilcek Foundation Prize lecture on Thursday, March 16, at 4 pm, speaking on the subject of "Controlling Cell Behavior: From Cytostasis to Metastasis."

Having chaired Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Cell Biology program for nearly 15 years, today Dr. Massagué leads its Cancer Biology and Genetics program. He is also a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator and was elected in 2000 to the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Massagué's work in this country has shed light on the molecular mechanism of action of a crucial family of growth factors that regulate cell behavior and embryonic development. Disruption of these pathways can underlie cancers, inherited disorders and other diseases. Dr. Massagué's work has also helped to elucidate genetic changes in cancer cells that determinetheir ability to disseminate to distant parts of the body. For this research, Dr. Massagué was honored in 2004 with Spain's most prestigious prize, the Prince of Asturias Award for Scientific and Technical Research, which is given annually to leading scientists from around the world.

Dr. Massagué is not the only member of his family to contribute to American society: upon moving to the United States, his wife Roser, also born in Barcelona, pursued degrees in education and psychology and today is a superintendent in the New York City public schools system.

Dr. Jan T. Vilcek, a professor and research scientist at the New York University School of Medicine, and Marica F. Vilcek, an art historian, established The Vilcek Foundation in 2000 as a way to honor achievement in their respective fields and to show appreciation for the opportunities they received as newcomers to the United States. The Vilceks came to the United States in the 1960s as refugees from former communist Czechoslovakia.

“In launching the Vilcek Prize program, we hope to raise public awareness of a very positive side of immigration: the way in which the intelligence, talent, and drive of immigrants helps this country to maintain its position of world leader in science and culture,” says Dr. Vilcek.

“When we came to this country, we were unknown. We started here with no references or guarantees, and this country gave us the opportunity to succeed,” adds Mrs. Vilcek. “It is important that this country continues to make good on its historic promise as a land of opportunity.”

The Vilcek Prize will be bestowed on Dr. Massagué on Tuesday, March 21, 2006 in a gala ceremony at The Mandarin-Oriental on Columbus Circle in New York. Dr. Massagué will be introduced by Dr. Harold Varmus, co-recipient of a Nobel Prize for studies of the genetic basis of cancer and President of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. A second prize will also be given that night to honor achievement in the arts. The winner of the Vilcek Prize in the arts and humanities will be announced in the next few weeks.

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