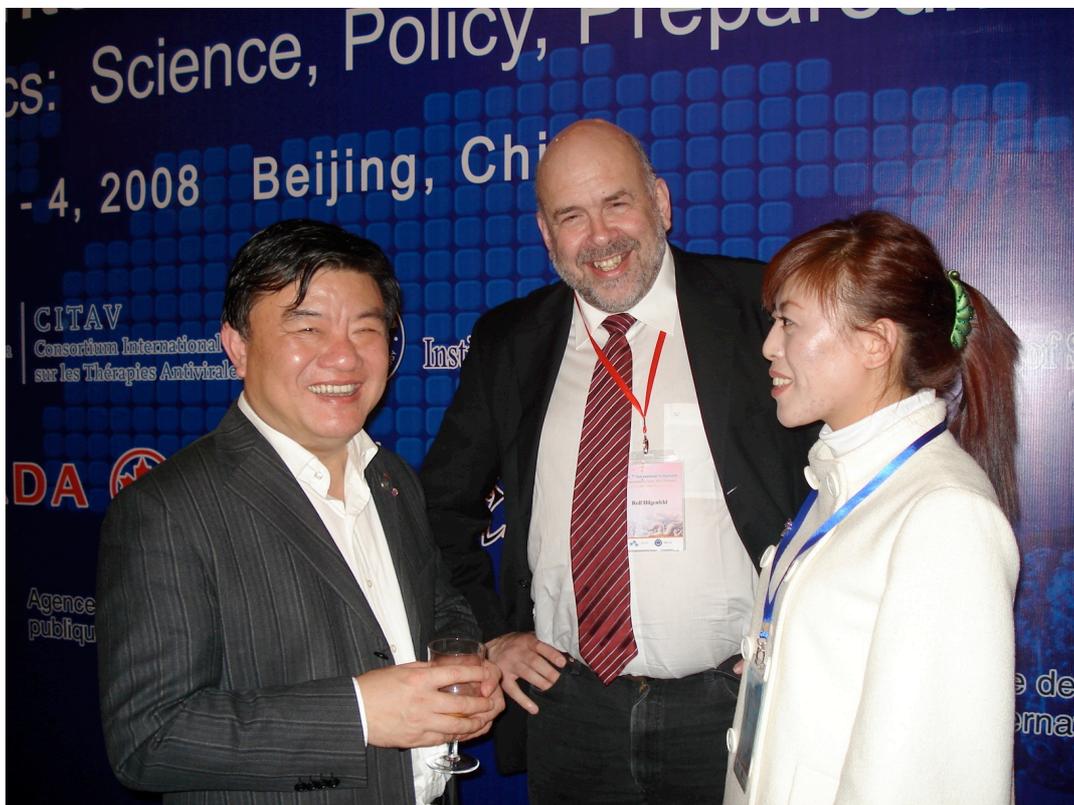


Enterovirus inhibitors from Lübeck catch attention of Chinese Minister of Health, Prof. Chen Zhu

At a recent meeting of the International Consortium on Antivirals (ICAV) in Beijing, Prof. Rolf Hilgenfeld presented new inhibitors of enteroviruses, in particular coxsackieviruses and enterovirus 68/71, that have been designed and synthesized at his institute at the University of Lübeck. This caught the attention of the Chinese Minister of Health, Prof. Chen Zhu, who discussed the results with Prof. Hilgenfeld (see photograph). In China, enterovirus 71 and/or coxsackievirus A16 caused a major outbreak of Hand-, Foot- and Mouth Disease (HFMD) earlier this year, affecting 400,000 people and killing at least 120 small children. HFMD starts with painful blisters on the extremities and on the tongue, but can also cause severe pneumonia. Children are most affected. So far, there are no approved antiviral drugs available for treatment of the disease.

The International Consortium on Antivirals (ICAV) is an association of virologists, chemists, and structural biologists from academia who work on the discovery and preclinical development of antiviral compounds for neglected viral diseases. This initiative was formed in 2004 in response to the SARS outbreak in Toronto, Canada, in order to compensate for the relative reluctant attitude of the pharmaceutical industry towards developing drugs directed at non-chronic viral infections. With a membership of more than 200 scientists in 27 countries, ICAV has the goal to identify the most useful antiviral drug candidates in academic laboratories around the world, to raise funds for their preclinical and clinical development, and to introduce them into the market. Special emphasis is on making such drugs available at cost price in those countries that need them most, i.e. in Africa, South America, and certain regions of South-East Asia. ICAV's goal is to market one antiviral drug every five years (see www.icav-citav.ca).



Chinese Minister of Health, Prof. Chen Zhu (left), discussing the discovery of enterovirus inhibitors at Lübeck University, with Prof. Rolf Hilgenfeld and Ms. Chen Kuilan.