Awards for Lübeck Biochemists for Research on New Viruses

For more than one year, scientists at the Institute of Biochemistry, University of Lübeck (Director: Prof. Rolf Hilgenfeld), have investigated the Zika virus. This virus is transmitted by mosquitoes in tropical and subtropical regions and led to an explosive epidemic in Latin America in 2015/16. Upon infection of pregnant women, Zika virus can cause severe malformations of the fetus, in particular microcephaly. The virus can also be transmitted through sexual activities. In July 2016, the Lübeck biochemists published first results on Zika virus in the renowned journal "Science" (Lei et al., *Science* **353**, 503 - 505 (2016)). They reported the elucidation of the three-dimensional structure of a key enzyme of Zika virus, the so-called NS2B-NS3 protease, in complex with an inhibitor. In recognition of these results, the first author of this publication, Dr. Jian Lei, was now awarded the "Förderpreis" of the Biochemical Section of the German Chemical Society (GDCh). Jian Lei is originally from Xian (China) and studied at Peking University. The award is connected with the opportunity for Dr. Lei to give a lecture on his work at the Science Forum that the GDCh is organizing in Berlin from September 10 to 14, to celebrate its 150th anniversary.

At the same time, Dr. Linlin Zhang from the same institute was honoured with the Chu Family Foundation Award for women scientists, in recognition of her research towards the development of antiviral drugs targeting coronaviruses (such as the SARS coronavirus), enteroviruses, and flaviviruses (the family which includes Zika virus). The foundation has been created in Atlanta (Georgia, USA) by the well-known chemist Dr. Chung "David" Chu and his wife Jane Chu. The award is granted for excellent research in the field of drugs against viral diseases and was presented to Dr. Zhang in late May at the International Conference on Antiviral Research in Atlanta. Linlin Zhang is originally from Shandong Province in China and completed her PhD earlier this year in Professor Hilgenfeld's institute at the University of Lübeck.