

PRESS RELEASE FROM NATURE PUBLISHING GROUP & FONDATION IPSEN

7 June 2008

For immediate release

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**“Multiple sclerosis: From Pathogenesis to Therapy”  
The fourth meeting in the “Emergence & Convergence” series  
jointly organised by *Nature Medicine*, *Nature Immunology* and *La Fondation  
IPSEN***

La Fondation IPSEN and Nature Publishing Group share the same desire to help new scientific knowledge emerge and facilitate the exchange of the most promising ideas from a variety of different research areas. In 2007, the two organisations came together to create a new series of scientific events – the Emergence & Convergence mini-symposia - one-day meetings highlighting some of the most dynamic sectors in biological and medical research. The fourth meeting, in Paris on June 6 2008, was the first to be held in France. The topic was multiple sclerosis, a particularly important area in neurological research, and the meeting was organized by Eva Chmielnicki (*Nature Medicine*, USA), Laurie Dempsey (*Nature Immunology*, USA) and Yves Christen (*La Fondation IPSEN*, France).

Multiple sclerosis is an inflammatory autoimmune disease targeting the central nervous system, leading to demyelination and axon degeneration, and to severe disability as the disease progresses. Multiple sclerosis presents as a clinically heterogeneous disease, which has been problematic for efforts to develop appropriate animal models. Many environmental and genetic factors have been identified that may initiate disease. Various immune and neural cells have been found to play key roles in disease pathogenesis and progression. The symposium addressed open questions in multiple sclerosis research, with the goal of identifying future directions that may lead to therapy.

Speakers at the meeting were leading international experts: Burkhard Becher (University of Zürich, Switzerland), Christian Confavreux (Hôpital Neurologique Pierre Wertheimer, France), Britta Engelhardt (University of Bern, Switzerland), Roland Martin (Center for Molecular Neurobiology, Hamburg, Germany), Stephen Sawcer (University of Cambridge, UK), Kenneth J. Smith (University College London, UK) and Larry Steinman (Stanford University, USA) and Marc Veldhoen (MRC National Institute for Medical Research, UK).

Each meeting in the Emergence & Convergence series brings together a group of leading international speakers to address a topic of strong current interest and one which has elements both of new advances in the field – 'emergence' – and a developing consensus on the importance and integration of the new advances with existing understanding – 'convergence'. Where applicable, meetings are cross-disciplinary in nature to facilitate and promote collaboration. The first three mini-symposia in the series discussed: “Small RNAs in Development, Immunology and Cancer” (New York, October 2007), “Genome Evolution and Structural Variation: Next Steps in Natural Human Genetic Variation” (Seattle, November 2007) and “Epigenetics and Behavior” (Houston, March 2007).

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**About La Fondation IPSEN**

Established in 1983 under the aegis of the *Fondation de France*, the mission of *La Fondation IPSEN* is to contribute to the development and dissemination of scientific knowledge. The long-standing action of *La Fondation IPSEN* is aimed at furthering the interaction between researchers and clinical practitioners, which is indispensable due to the extreme specialisation of these professions. The ambition of *La Fondation IPSEN* is not to offer definitive knowledge, but to initiate a reflection about the major scientific issues of the forthcoming years. It has developed an important international network of scientific experts who meet regularly at meetings known as *Colloques Médecine et Recherche*, dedicated to six main themes: Alzheimer's disease, neurosciences, longevity, endocrinology, the vascular system and cancer science. In 2007, *La Fondation IPSEN* started three new series of meetings. The first is in partnership with the Salk Institute and *Nature* and is an annual meeting which focuses on aspects of Biological Complexity; the second is the "Emergence and Convergence" series, and the third is with *Cell* and the Massachusetts General Hospital entitled "Exciting Biologies". Since its beginning, *La Fondation IPSEN* has organised more than 100 international conferences, published 67 volumes with renowned publishers and close to 200 issues of a widely distributed newsletter *Alzheimer Actualités*. It has also awarded more than 100 prizes and grants.

**About Nature Publishing Group**

Nature Publishing Group (NPG) is a division of Macmillan Publishers Ltd, dedicated to serving the academic, professional scientific and medical communities. NPG's flagship title, *Nature*, was first published in 1869. Other publications include Nature research journals, Nature Reviews, Nature Clinical Practice, and a range of prestigious academic journals including society-owned publications. NPG also provides news content through Nature News and scientific career information through Naturejobs. The company has a growing conference series. NPG is a global company with headquarters in London and offices in New York, San Francisco, Washington DC, Boston, Tokyo, Paris, Munich, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Delhi, Mexico City and Basingstoke. For more information, please go to [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com).

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