

# Curious Future Insight™ – Science for a better tomorrow

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is committed to work together with researchers and entrepreneurs all over the world to solve the challenges of today and enable the dreams of a better tomorrow. Dr Ulrich Betz, Vice President Innovation at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, and his team are organising one of the world's most renowned conference on the future of science and technology, Curious 2022 – Future Insight™. Alongside a panel of >70 top speakers, among them numerous Nobel laureates, the conference also features the awarding of the annual 1 million Euro Future Insight™ Prize by Merck.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a vibrant science and technology company with more than 350 years' history, is active in Healthcare, Life Sciences and Electronics. As the first chemical and pharmaceutical company of the world, founded in 1668, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is investing in overcoming major global challenges. They are also committed to facilitating communications and building networks within the scientific community.

In 2018, at the occasion of the company's 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany started a number of special activities around science & technology. One of these was the roll-out of the science conference Curious2018 – Future Insight™ Conference. The upcoming conference Curious2022 will be held in Germany on the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July 2022. There will

also be opportunities for participants to join virtually.

In addition, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany will be running a virtual event this year, called the **2021 Future Insight™ Days** on July 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, 2021. During this event, the 2021 Future Insight™ Prize – worth €1 million per year – will be awarded annually for 35 years to support ground-breaking science. The prize will be given out in the area of food for innovative research to secure the nutrition of a growing world population. In 2020, the Future Insight™ Prize was awarded in the area of multi-drug resistance and in 2019 for pandemic preparedness; the first topic of the Future Insight™ Prize was selected by Dr Ulrich Betz, Vice President Innovation at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and his team more than a year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting that the threat



of global pandemics had already been identified by the group as a key area of research. This emphasises the forward-thinking nature of the work done at Merck KGaA.

The Future Insight™ Virtual Days will furthermore feature the awarding of the Nature Spinoff Prize and the Johann Anton Merck Award. Sign-up for the event is now possible at <http://curiousfutureinsight.com>.

## SCIENCE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Curious2022 – Future Insight™ conference aims to bring together the world's leading scientists and entrepreneurs, among them numerous Nobel laureates, for a discussion around the exciting possibilities for science and technology in the future, solving the challenges of today and enabling dreams of a better tomorrow. It is unique in its coverage of a wide range of disciplines (see below), as well as fostering interdisciplinary cooperation.

The conference will deliver cutting-edge talks, covering a range of topics, for example:

- Healthy Lives – New breakthrough therapies and diagnostics
- Materials & Solutions – Chemistry and beyond
- Bright Future – New ways of working and collaborating
- Vibrant Digital – The power of in-silico
- Human Mind – Consciousness uncovered
- Life Reimagined – Synthetic biology and more
- Energy – Sustainability and storage



## Curious2022 and other schemes sponsored by Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany provide much needed support for research and development.

- Nutrition – Healthy food for a growing world
- Mobility – Transportation for tomorrow

These topics will be covered through a range of keynote presentations, workshops and short presentations running in parallel. There will also be several evening events and two panel discussions organised in collaboration with AAAS/Science and Nature Research.

There are two ways that individuals can participate in the conference, either by purchasing a ticket to attend on site or virtually, or by submitting an abstract. Ticket prices vary, with a reduced price available for students and for virtual participation only. Those with accepted abstracts will be offered a free ticket to attend Curious2022 with oral or poster presentations.

The ticket price to attend the conference on-site includes access to all stages, access to the exhibition and poster areas and participation in workshop sessions.

Curious2022 – Future Insight™ conference offers the chance to present work to the scientific community, to be part of a global network of leading researchers, to start new business relationships and to be part of novel initiatives.

In order to be part of this innovative event, more information about how to register can be found at [www.curious2022.com](http://www.curious2022.com) or by contacting the team at [info@future-insight.org](mailto:info@future-insight.org).

Input from conference partners is crucial in supporting the event to go ahead. In 2018, participants from 200 companies



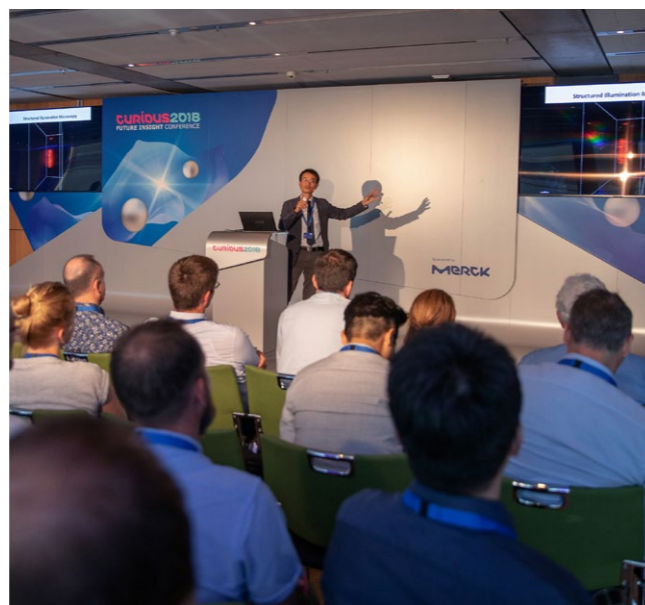
In 2018, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany announced the Future Insight™ Prize – worth €1 million per year for the next 35 years.

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With 1,300 attendees and more than 60 speakers, Curious2018 was a tremendous success.

representing 39 countries have been following the conference program. At the exhibition area, sponsors had the chance to interact directly with all participants. Sponsors included government ministries, scientific journals, digital innovation companies and global leaders in engineering, sciences and technologies.

#### INNOVATION CUP

Merck KGaA also hosts the Innovation Cup, a scheme which offers the brightest students from around the world to meet and learn from leading science and technology experts, with the chance to win the Innovation Cup worth €20,000 plus €5,000 for runners-up.

This week-long camp will involve working in teams to generate new ideas focused on oncology, immuno-oncology, autoimmunity, drug discovery technologies, digitalisation and pandemic preparedness. Furthermore, the camp introduces participants to the work done by Merck KGaA as well as other pharmaceutical research and development projects and understanding how products are discovered, developed and reach the market.

Applications are welcome from postgraduate students and postdocs with a background in science or

engineering, including computer and data sciences. Deadline to apply for next year's Innovation Cup is the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. More information can be accessed here: <http://innovationcup.merckgroup.com>.

#### RESEARCH GRANTS AND CHALLENGES

In addition, Merck KGaA supports research and development through a number of other initiatives.

Grants of €100,000 – €500,000 per year for up to three years are available in research areas including drug

### United by science, researchers and entrepreneurs create a better tomorrow.

discovery, sustainability, cell culture media recycling, organoids, digital image analysis, real-time testing and sensors, nanoparticles for nucleic acid delivery and bioelectronics. Applications are possible from January 15<sup>th</sup>-August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 at <http://researchgrants.merckgroup.com>.

In addition to these grants, Merck KGaA is organising a series of research competitions. Winning these challenges not only offers the opportunity to partner with Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany but also to be recognised as a pioneer in this area. In particular, they are focusing on challenges in compound

synthesis, high-k dielectric materials, lab connectivity and machine learning. Previous winning projects submitted for the 'diabetes prevention innovation challenge' in 2018 include an artificial intelligence platform to manage and prevent diabetes, a mobile app designed to facilitate weight loss and glycaemic control and an app that aims to establish connections between patients and healthy food stores. Details on currently active challenges can be found at <http://researchchallenges.merckgroup.com>.

In a world where scientific knowledge is changing day-to-day, Curious2022 and other schemes offered by Dr Betz and his team provide much-needed support for research and development. Events such as Curious Future Insight Conference, with speakers including Nobel laureates, are among the world's most renowned gatherings to explore future opportunities for science and technology.

Another interesting initiative from Merck KGaA on science & technology is the Darmstadt Science Declaration – Make Science Not War, a global call to action to all nations, organizations and societies to invest more resources in the advancement of science and technology. Everybody is invited to sign and support the global movement at <http://make-science-not-war.org>.



# Behind the Research

## Dr Ulrich Betz, Merck KGaA

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### Research Objectives

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany plays an active role in fostering new talent and bringing the international research community together. Curious2022 is one of the world's most renowned gatherings on the future of science & technology.

### Detail

Dr Ulrich A.K. Betz  
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**Bio**  
Dr Ulrich Betz is R&D manager with more than 20 years of leadership

experience in the pharmaceutical and chemical industry. He has established several key game changing technologies and innovation paradigms at Merck and Bayer. Since 2017, Dr Betz is Vice President Innovation at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany.

### References

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### Personal Response

**What are some of the positives to come out of the pandemic in terms of opportunities for research and development?**

“ The pandemic has shown that discovery and development of pharmaceuticals and vaccines can be accelerated, this will help to gain speed for this important field of science also in the future. ”



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2021 FUTURE INSIGHT DAYS

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