

John Mendelsohn, M.D.

Dr. John Mendelsohn is the President of The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. Dr. John Mendelsohn was born in Cincinnati and earned his bachelor's degree in biochemical sciences magna cum laude from Harvard College in 1958. While there, he was the first undergraduate student of Dr. James D. Watson, who later won the Nobel Prize in Medicine for identifying the structure of DNA. Dr. Mendelsohn received his medical degree cum laude from Harvard Medical School in 1963. He was founding director of the Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego, and served as chairman of the department of medicine at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center for eleven years.

Dr. Mendelsohn combines experience in clinical and laboratory research with administrative expertise for guiding The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in the new century. Since becoming president in July 1996, he has recruited a visionary management team and implemented new priorities for integrated programs in patient care, research, education and cancer prevention.

For almost three decades, Dr. Mendelsohn has been at the forefront in understanding how growth factors regulate the proliferation of cancer cells by activating receptors on the surface of the cells. These receptors, when activated, control key cell signaling pathways. He and his colleagues developed a specific monoclonal antibody called Cetuximab (ErbixTM), which blocks the activity of the receptor for epidermal growth factor. Their publication in 1983 was the first demonstration of an anticancer therapy which targets a growth factor receptor and a tyrosine kinase, and their publication in 1991 was the first clinical trial testing this approach in cancer patients. Subsequent clinical studies have demonstrated that therapy combining this antireceptor antibody with chemotherapy or radiation is effective treatment for patients with several forms of cancer. On February 12, 2004, the FDA approved ErbixTM for treatment of advanced colorectal cancer, and on March 1, 2006 for treatment of head and neck cancer.

Dr. Mendelsohn served as the founding editor of Clinical Cancer Research, a bimonthly clinical research journal published by the American Association for Cancer Research. He has authored more than 250 scientific papers and articles for journals and a textbook on the Molecular Basis of Cancer.

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Dr. Mendelsohn's past honors include the Gold Medal of Paris, the Joseph H. Burchenal Clinical Research Award from the American Association for Cancer Research, and The Breast Cancer Research Foundation's Jill Rose Award. He was elected to membership in the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. In May 2002, he received the Simon Shubitz Prize from the University of Chicago. He was honored with the David A. Karnofsky Memorial Award from the American Society of Clinical Oncology in 2002, and received the Bristol-Myers Squibb Freedom to Discover Award for Distinguished Achievement in Cancer Research in October 2004. In April 2005 he and his wife were jointly honored for public service by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. In May 2005 he received the Fullbright Lifetime Achievement Medal which was created to honor Fullbright alumni whose distinguished careers and civic and cultural contributions have sought to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy, and perception. In May 2006, he received the Dan David Prize in the Future Time Dimension at Tel Aviv University for pioneering the rapidly developing modality of antibody-mediated cancer therapy in general and that of antibodies to growth factor receptors in particular.

Dr. Mendelsohn and his wife, Anne, jointly participate in multiple civic activities. Dr. Mendelsohn is an active member of the Greater Houston Partnership (Board), the Houston Technology Center (Board), BioHouston (Vice-Chairman), the Center for Houston's Future (Board) and the Houston Forum. The Mendelsohns have three sons.