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2026 Future Insight Prize Goes to Spear's Vasilis Ntziachristos for Non-Invasive Health Sensing

Darmstadt, Germany, June 23, 2026 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, today awarded the 2026 Future Insight Prize to Prof. Dr. Vasilis Ntziachristos, representing optoacoustic and fluorescence solutions company [Spear](#), Munich, Germany, a spin-off of Helmholtz Munich and Technical University of Munich. Ntziachristos is also the [Chair of Biological Imaging](#) at the Technical University of Munich as well as Director of Bioengineering and Director of the [Institute of Biological and Medical Imaging](#) at the Helmholtz Centre in Munich. The € 300,000 research grant award recognizes Ntziachristos' pioneering work in enabling non-invasive and continuous monitoring of human biology.

"This year's prize to Vasilis Ntziachristos recognizes a scientist who has advanced a fundamentally new approach to measuring the human body. His work combines light and sound in a way that overcomes long-standing limits of sensing," said Kai Beckmann, Chairman of the Executive Board and Group CEO of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. "This opens up access to a new layer of biological understanding. It could allow us to detect early metabolic changes before symptoms appear. At our company, we pursue the same goal: creating previously unseen combinations of science and technology, and turning them into real-world applications."

"I am grateful to see the support from Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, for our pioneering research," said Vasilis Ntziachristos. "Our goal has always been to observe biological processes in ways that were not previously possible. By expanding the depth, quality and dimensionality of non-invasive measurement, we





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aim to support earlier disease detection, more effective therapies and better outcomes for patients.”

Ntziachristos’ research has fundamentally advanced biomedical imaging by introducing optoacoustic technologies that combine light and sound to visualize tissue structures and functions with unprecedented resolution and depth. Unlike conventional optical sensing methods, optoacoustic approaches enable direct measurement of biological signals such as microcirculation, oxygenation and metabolic activity. These capabilities address a fundamental limitation of current sensing approaches by allowing for non-invasive observation of a large number of biological processes that define health and disease. By translating these advances into sensor technologies, the awarded research aims to make possible a new class of health systems capable of capturing multiple biomarkers simultaneously and continuously over time.

Since 2018, the Future Insight Prize has honored outstanding scientists whose work has the potential to enable groundbreaking innovations for humanity. The 2027 Future Insight Prize will focus on the visionary goal of an AI-powered robotic scientist – a fully autonomous system capable of generating hypotheses, conducting experiments and accelerating discovery through self-learning cycles. Members of the global scientific community who wish to suggest outstanding candidates for the 2027 prize can [e-mail](#) the jury. The award will be presented at Curious2027 – Future Insight Conference in Heidelberg, Germany.

About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, operates across life science, healthcare and electronics. More than 62,000 employees work to make a positive difference to millions of people’s lives every day by creating more joyful and sustainable ways to live. From providing products and services that accelerate drug development and manufacturing as well as discovering unique ways to treat the most challenging diseases to enabling the intelligence of devices – the company is everywhere. In 2025, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 21.1 billion in 65 countries.

The company holds the global rights to the name and trademark “Merck” internationally. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the business sectors of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, operate as MilliporeSigma in life science, EMD Serono in healthcare and EMD Electronics in electronics. Since its founding in 1668, scientific exploration and responsible entrepreneurship have been key to the company’s technological and scientific advances. To this day, the founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed company.

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