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2



EXPLORING THE NEW FRONTIER GENOMICS COMES OF AGE

PLUS

JAN VILCEK: A MAN
OF MANY GIFTS

RICHARD TSIEN
TO LEAD
NEW NEUROSCIENCE
INSTITUTE

SECRETS OF AGING
AND BEHAVIOR

A Man of Many Gifts

Q&A with Dr. Jan T. Vilcek

JAN T. VILCEK, MD, PHD, professor of microbiology, and his wife, Marica, recently pledged \$21 million to NYU Langone Medical Center that will help purchase and renovate residence hall space on East 26th Street for students at NYU School of Medicine, create a merit-based full-tuition scholarship fund for medical students, and expand the couple's fellowship fund for students in the Department of Microbiology. For the Vilceks, it was the latest in a series of extraordinary gifts they have made to NYU Langone flowing from royalties they earn from the anti-inflammatory drug Remicade. Used by over a million people worldwide to treat rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, psoriasis, and other inflammatory disorders, the drug was developed from a monoclonal antibody generated by Dr. Vilcek and his colleague Junming Le, PhD, at NYU Langone.

Dr. Vilcek joined the NYU Langone faculty in 1965 after he and his wife defected from communist Czechoslovakia. In 2005 they announced their intention to donate \$105 million from their future royalties to NYU Langone. NYU Physician recently spoke with Dr. Vilcek at his office in the Smilow Research Center.

NYU PHYSICIAN: *You and your wife, Marica, have pledged over \$100 million to the Medical Center, an unprecedented level of generosity by a faculty member of any institution. Most of the money is devoted to research, but this additional gift of \$21 million mainly supports education-related activities. Why?*

DR. VILCEK: My goal in life has never been to become rich. Much of the royalty income from Remicade sales due to me as an NYU faculty member goes to fulfill our 2005 pledge to NYU, but Marica and I still receive significant royalty income. What better way to spend it than to give it back to NYU School of Medicine? I've always considered medical education to be important, and it has become even more so over the last decade.

NYU PHYSICIAN: *Why is that?*

DR. VILCEK: There is a stage in life—and I think I've reached that stage—when I'm no longer quite as active in research as I once was, yet I feel that I can still do something very useful in medical education.

NYU PHYSICIAN: *Why support a residence hall?*

DR. VILCEK: We lost some good applicants to other schools because the physical condition of our previous residence hall had deteriorated. The new residence hall is so much more comfortable and attractive! Those students who moved from our older facility to the new one are very, very happy. We already have great students, but the

new residence hall will help attract an even better group of students.

NYU PHYSICIAN: *Why did you decide to base the scholarships for medical students primarily on merit and not on need?*

DR. VILCEK: We decided to base the scholarships primarily on merit because my main goal is to improve the competitiveness of our medical school and attract the most highly qualified and talented students.

NYU PHYSICIAN: *Over the last 10 years, you've developed widespread philanthropic interests, including the Vilcek Foundation. What does the Foundation do?*

DR. VILCEK: The Foundation recognizes the contributions of immigrants to biomedical science—that's my background—and to the arts, which is my wife's background. Marica studied art history and worked for most of her professional life at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Our main goal is to raise public awareness about the contributions of immigrants to science and the arts.

NYU PHYSICIAN: *What makes you happy?*

DR. VILCEK: Well, one thing that makes me happy is to see the Medical Center flourish under Dr. Grossman's leadership. And I'm absolutely delighted that my and my colleagues' research has contributed to this successful new life, so to speak, of the entire medical center. ●

